

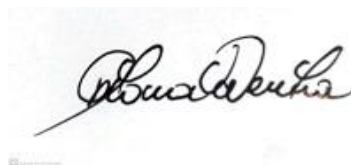
The Peasant Food Question

Agrarian Reforms, Depeasantisation and Food Sovereignty in
Dispute, Colombia, 1961-2013

Submitted by Diana María Valencia Duarte to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History
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Abstract

Colombia started a five-decade-long series of developmentalist agrarian reforms in 1961, which oscillated between progression and regression with a degenerative effect on those they claimed to benefit: the peasantries. This thesis compares three case study sub-regions of Colombia to argue that many agrarian reforms acted instead as counter-reforms, contributing to depeasantisation, the loss of communities' food sovereignty – and consequently their food security – and the depletion of agroecosystems. The three sub-regions investigated are: Los Montes de María, a warm-land; the coffee region, a temperate-land; and Santurbán, a cold-land. This thesis' findings on peasantries' accounts derive from privileging the voice of the same communities and, through them, their relational reading of their own territories and crops as historical subjects. The comparative analysis reveals how the uneven resolutions of the agrarian question in Colombia have driven a gradual loss of food sovereignty and agro-biodiversity in the three cases. It also questions the degradation of peasant cultures and their subsequent detachment from Nature, with damaging environmental impacts. To do so, this thesis has used an environmental history methodology, including the extensive use of oral history, combined with principles drawn from Critical Agrarian Studies (CAS), political ecology and decolonial/post-developmental approaches. The thesis focuses on the late twentieth and early twenty-first century: a period dominated in Colombia by the domestic adoption of international capitalist paradigms, such as developmentalist interventions, market liberalisation, and neoliberal globalisation, starting with the 1961 Social and Agrarian Reform and finishing in the 2013 Great Peasant Strike. This thesis reviews how these paradigms were embedded by the Colombian state, who colluded with local economic elites to drive agrarian counter-reforms with anti-peasant agendas. By doing so, it takes the study from global to local frames of analysis. This thesis argues that state-imposed agrarian reform actually served to abolish – partially or entirely, directly and indirectly – the peasants' way of life and food production in the sites of study. It also argues that these were colonial, patriarchal, racist/classist and, in general, violent; and ultimately led to different levels of depeasantisation not just of the countryside but also of peasants themselves, and to the creation of food and environmental injustice.

Covid-19 Impact Statement

This thesis has been a product of intensive research, both in international archives and in Colombia itself, using oral history as its main primary source. Although much of the fieldwork was undertaken before March 2020, this thesis was nevertheless disrupted by the Covid pandemic in various ways. At a personal level, I contracted Covid in 2020 and since then have been struggling with physical and neurological aftereffects, or long Covid, which has slowed my progress and caused difficulties with writing in English as this is my second language. Covid lockdowns and being separated from family in Colombia, particularly from my mother who was at high risk, also worsened mental health conditions. Additionally, I had to take on caring responsibilities for my partner.

In direct research terms, the pandemic travel restrictions and lockdowns prevented follow up travel to Colombia and final archive trips. Archives such as the Colombian General Archive (AGN) or the Lands' Agency (ANT) archive which could have provided important evidence granted me access during the fieldwork but time was very brief and they required a further, longer visit. It also limited contact with my fixers and research participants who are peasants in rural areas of Colombia, where they were confined with very limited or no access to internet services.

My university was very supportive in those critical moments, granting both an extension when I was sick and the hardware required out of the University facilities to complete the thesis. Additionally, the University's wellbeing services and the NHS have been very diligent and considerate with my case. Most importantly, I have counted on amazing supervisors who have been highly supportive and understanding. They have been very thoughtful and even in the worst times, they never lost confidence in me and this project, and guided me through all the options available which kept me going. I never felt alone.

To mitigate Covid's impact on my work, I worked with my supervisors to adapt my research plan and engaged with university training on Covid-adaptations. I reframed the thesis to focus more on archival material than had been originally planned, and made use of digital archival and research collections, since physical archives were no longer available. To manage my time and energy, and to keep motivation while dealing with long Covid symptoms, I have also been organising a write club three days per week with other PGRs who

have had similar problems with their theses. This worked primarily – and still does – as a support group.

Nevertheless, the Covid disruption – although mitigated – had an impact on this thesis. The inability to conduct follow-up interviews in Colombia and final archival research has resulted in some areas of analysis being less developed than were planned, particularly in the last chapter. What is now Chapter 5 was originally planned to be two chapters, one of which would cover the 2013 Peasant Strike and its impacts in more depth. This has been adapted into a more broadly-focused Chapter 5, and an epilogue that addresses some key developments following the strike. Chapter 5 is missing analysis of synergies between multi-stressors for the coffee region case specifically, and the peasant union activity there which could only be briefly mentioned in the epilogue.

Despite this, I believe that this thesis still presents a cohesive argument based on the sustained critical analysis of a wide range of evidence, and that it offers an original contribution to knowledge.

I thank you in advance for your consideration in this regard.

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Secondly, I would like to acknowledge that this research would have never been possible without the sponsoring of the College of Humanities Global Excellence scholarship and overseas archival research allowance, and the fieldtrip grant awarded by Society for Latin American Studies UK (SLAS).

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List of Contents

Abstract	2
Covid-19 Impact Statement.....	3
Acknowledgements	5
List of Contents.....	7
List of Tables	10
List of Illustrations	11
List of Accompanying Material	12
Glossary	13
List of acronyms.....	16
INTRODUCTION	19
Key Arguments	25
Literature Review	27
Critical Concepts	35
Decolonial Research and Internal Colonialism.....	35
Peasantries	37
Depeasantisation.....	41
<i>Territorio</i> : Lands and Peasant Landscape.....	42
Radical Relationality	44
Agrarian Reform and Counter-reform.....	45
Food Sovereignty and Food Security.....	47
Methodology	52
Sources	53
Fieldwork	56
Analytical Framework.....	56
Positionality	57
Thesis Structure	58
CHAPTER 1. Colombian Environmental and Food Sovereignty Contexts, pre-1961.....	61
Colombian Environments	61
Case Studies.....	67
Three Groups of Peasantries: Montemarianos, <i>paramunos</i> and <i>cafeteros</i>	71
Colonisation: Shaping Land and Food Cultures.....	75
Food Security in the Territories of Study in the 1960s.....	85
CHAPTER 2. ‘The Swamp, the Mill and the Underwater Parish’	93

‘17 de mogolla y 7 de afrecho’ (17 of bran, 7 of husk): The Arrival of American Wheat	96
‘¡Llegó el INCORA!’ (INCORA arrived!): The Agrarian Reform Projects Córdoba 2 and Bolívar 1	105
The Underwater Parish.....	106
The Dried Swamp.....	115
‘¡Nuestros viejos vivieron como reyes!’ (Our old men lived like kings!): The Coffee Pact.....	121
Juan Valdez and Conchita: “100% Colombian Coffee”	121
The International Coffee Pact.....	126
Conclusions.....	129
CHAPTER 3. ‘The Landless Women’	133
<i>Campesinas and terratenientes’</i> in the 1970s: Historical Context	136
<i>Las deshonradas y las alimentadoras</i> : Gender-based Violences as Colonial Legacies.....	139
The Good Landlord	147
Nature Literacy: Rural Women’s Role in Food Sovereignty	153
‘ <i>Las roba-tierras’</i> : Rural Women’s Role in the 1970s Agrarian Reform	157
The ANUC Women.....	159
21 st of February: Zero Hour	167
The <i>Terrateniente</i> Coalition Counter-reform	171
Conclusion	175
CHAPTER 4. ‘The Green Poison’	177
Long Global and Small Local Green Revolutions	180
Origins of the Green Revolution in Colombia.....	184
From Irrigated Rice to the March of the Avocado	193
The Avocado March.....	200
The <i>guamo</i> Curse: Coffee Deforestation and Crisis	204
The Great Deforestation.....	208
The Aftermath of the Coffee Bonanza	214
The Invisible Frontier Hitchhikers: Potato Worms	218
Conclusion	228
CHAPTER 5. ‘Peasantries of <i>El Dorado</i> ’ Multiple Stressors on Food Sovereignty and Depeasantisation in the Neoliberal Era.....	232
Contribution of Multiple Stressors to Depeasantisation in the Sub-regions of Study in 1990-2000s	235
Context: The End of the Age of (Almost) Innocence	235
Impact of Open Market Reform On Peasant Food Sovereignty.....	237

<i>La Violencia</i> : Armed Conflict and Terror Associated with Displacement and Land Grabbing.....	243
Competing Explanations of the Impact of Climate Crisis	249
Synergies Among Multiple Stressors and the Rise of the <i>acuatendientes</i>	253
The Palm Oil and ‘Biofuel Dispositif’ Counter-reform.....	254
Santurbán: Eco-capitalism and Environmentalisms in Dispute.....	265
Conclusion	281
CONCLUSIONS	284
Epilogue: Repeasantisation	295
Repeasantisation by Socio-political Action	297
Repeasantisation by Retro-innovation and Adaptation.....	301
Adoption of Ethnic and Territorial Identities	302
Final Reflection	304
References	305
Appendices	344

List of Tables

Table 1. Main literature bodies that feed, inspire and dialogue with this thesis.	27
Table 2. Physical archives involved in this research.....	53
Table 3. FEDECAFÉ Investment in infrastructure (1944-1989).....	128

List of Illustrations

Figure 1. Food security dimensions	49
Figure 2. Food sovereignty	49
Figure 3. Rough structure of the thesis according to the blocks of evidence's analysis	57
Figure 4. Land characteristics around the world	63
Figure 5. Colombia's physical map and fieldwork routes.....	65
Figure 6. Vertical vegetation belts in Colombia.	66
Figure 7. Coffee Axis route map.	68
Figure 8. Santurbán route map.	70
Figure 9. Los Montes de María route map.	71
Figure 10. Domestic production vs imports of wheat in Colombia.....	101
Figure 11. Fertiliser use, comparison of nine countries including Colombia..	192
Figure 12. Improved seed distribution in Colombia in 1960s.	194
Figure 13. Differences in the Coffee Census by FEDECAFÉ.	212
Figure 14. Coffee production in Colombia against area sown traditionally and technified (1970-1999).	213
Figure 15. Crop growth in María La Baja during the years of La Violencia	260
Figure 16. Simplified version of the Ecosystems of the Santurbán Jurisdiction.	270
Image 1. Tweet by the 'Unión de campesinos de Santurbán'	47
Image 2. Páramo de Santurbán, frailejones in front, headwater in the background. ...	69
Image 3. Photographs of peasants from Los Montes de María and Santurbán	74
Image 4. Photograph 'Wheat reapers' by Don Trino Antonio Villamizar, ca. 1985.	90
Image 5. Herrán's Mill.....	105
Image 6. Image of former President Alberto Lleras met a group of the first beneficiaries of the project Tolima 1 (Cunday) in July 1962.....	118
Image 7. Petrona Monterrosa Peñafiel playing the carángano.	153
Image 8. Photo of a drawing of stoves made from termite mounds.....	156
Image 9. Felicita Campos and Juana-Julia Guzmán as part of Chalarka's graphic novel.	165
Image 10. Baluarte de Auto-gestión Campesina Vicente Adamo.	169
Image 11. Photo of the unknown Colombian scientist visiting Asia with IRRI	196
Image 12. Arabica crops and guamo trees	209
Image 13. Size comparison of Arabica coffee tree with Caturra.....	209
Image 14. Photographs of El Playón reservoir in 2019	253
Image 15. Handwritten letter from a peasant woman to the CDMB.....	280

List of Accompanying Material

Appendix 1. Participant Information Sheet (English Translation)

Appendix 2. Consent Form (English Translation)

Glossary

<i>Abya-Yala</i>	The Colombian/Panameño <i>Cuna Tule</i> (or Kuna) indigenous name for Latin America, adopted by some communities as the 'true' or 'original' name, in contrast with the name(s) established by the colonial regime.
<i>Acuateniente</i>	Derived from <i>terrateniente</i> , the capitalist and colonial lord who accumulates land and power. This is the equivalent for those who hoard water resources.
<i>Afrecho</i>	Cereal grain husk shredded by grinding. Also, a name for the dried plants of previous harvests that could be used as a bed for growing the next year's seedlings.
<i>Aguadeño</i>	Coming from the municipality of Aguadas (Caldas). Usually referring to the hats made there.
<i>Alimentadora</i>	A coffee-farm administrator's wife who is in charge of all the meals for the coffee pickers who live within the farm during the harvest season.
<i>Amasijo</i>	A kneaded-dough product, usually sold in bakeries.
<i>Andean Forest</i>	This is the name of various upper-mountain forest altitudinal ecosystems. In Santurbán there are eight types of Andean Forest ecosystems such as low density, high humidity forest in erosional structural mountain; medium density, medium-high humidity forest in erosional structural mountain; or medium density medium-high humidity forest in fluvio-gravitational mountain, among others.
<i>Aparcero</i>	A tenant under a sharecropping contract.
<i>Arracacha</i>	<i>Arracacia xanthorrhiza</i> , an edible taproot.
<i>Arepa</i>	A flat roasted bread made from wheat or maize flour
<i>Autodefensa</i>	Private army for self-defence.
<i>Babilla</i>	<i>Caiman crocodilus</i> , a small alligator.
<i>Baldíos</i>	Public and vacant land in Colombia.
<i>Baluartes</i>	<i>-campesino</i> : Peasant stronghold or 'bastions' where communities were socially organised in communal administration of resources and self-management.
<i>Batata</i>	A tuber very similar to sweet potato.
<i>Binde</i>	Single-hob stove made from termite mounds, also known as <i>fogón costeño</i> (Caribbean coastal stove).
<i>Bocachicos</i>	<i>Prochilodus magdalenae</i> , endemic fish of the Magdalena River, Colombia.
<i>Bullerengue</i>	Colombian Caribbean dance with African roots.
<i>Cacuchos</i>	<i>Cacciucco</i> fish, a type of red snapper.
<i>Carángano</i>	A single-string instrument which produces different notes and rhythms and was used for communication between farms.
<i>Caturro/Caturra</i>	A Brazilian dwarf coffee variety adapted to survive under direct sunlight, facilitating monoculture.
<i>Chachafruto</i>	Small type of red beans.
<i>Chí'xi</i>	Andean mixed-ethnicity that comes from the Aymara 'motley', descendant from indigenous peoples.
<i>Chapolero(a)</i>	Coffee collector.
<i>Cholos</i>	Andean mixed-ethnicity; descendant from indigenous peoples.
<i>Ciénaga</i>	A type of wetland similar to a swamp or marsh.

<i>Cidra</i>	<i>Sechium edule</i> also known in Colombia as <i>guatila</i> . An edible plant (fruits, roots, stems, leaves can be eaten).
<i>Cimarrones</i>	Maroons, former enslaved black communities and individuals who freed themselves.
<i>Civilizar</i>	-the land: change the wild vegetal layer for crops.
<i>Convite</i>	Gathering for wheat threshing parties in Santurbán.
<i>Criollo(a)</i>	A Spanish descendent born and grown in Latin America.
<i>Ejidos</i>	Communal land used for agriculture.
<i>Fonda/Fonda paisa</i>	A typical restaurant in departments of Antioquia and the Coffee Axis, usually placed by the side of the roads, where only local food is served.
<i>Frailejón</i>	A perennial subshrub, <i>espeletia</i> , which grows in the <i>páramo</i> biomes in the High Andean moorlands and is endemic to Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela.
<i>Galerías</i>	Popular name for ‘farmers’ markets’ in the Coffee Axis.
<i>Guama</i>	<i>Inga edulis</i> , known as the ice-cream-bean fruit.
<i>Guaquería</i>	Informal search for gold and indigenous treasures.
<i>Guartinajas</i>	Lowland <i>paca</i> , large rodents.
<i>Latifundio</i>	Word coming from the Latin meaning ‘large estates’.
<i>Mafafa</i>	<i>Xanthosoma sagittifolium</i> , a tuber similar to yucca.
<i>Mazamorrero(a)</i>	A person who performs the <i>mazamorreo</i> for a living, washing sand on a plate to extract alluvial gold. This labour was performed by free black and indigenous peoples in the eighteenth century Colombia.
<i>Mediesqueros</i>	Form of tenancy agreement between a peasant farmer and the landowner where the investment profits are equally shared in halves.
<i>Menudo</i>	In the Andean areas: staples that accompany lunch.
<i>Mestizo(a)</i>	In this thesis, mestizo(a) refers to the offspring of parents of dissimilar identities. It does not refer to the ideological construct related to the colonial hierarchical structure.
<i>Mitaca/Traviesa</i>	The minor coffee harvest within the year cycle, the other one is called the principal.
<i>Mocholos</i>	Or <i>tararira</i> (<i>Hoplias malabaricus</i>) is a freshwater fish of the <i>Erythrinidae</i> family.
<i>Mojarra</i>	<i>Gerreidae</i> , a costal fish.
<i>Ñame</i>	A tuber grown in the Caribbean, type of yam.
<i>Ñeque</i>	Or <i>guatín</i> (<i>Dasyprocta fuliginosa</i>) is a small wild rodent of the <i>Dasyproctidae</i> family.
<i>Palenque</i>	Autonomous and free settlements founded by <i>cimarrón</i> communities after escaping from their enslavers in Latin America.
<i>Pancoger</i>	Subsistence crop plot.
<i>Panela</i>	Concentrated brown cane sugar.
<i>Paramero</i>	See <i>paramuno</i> .
<i>Páramo</i>	Andean highland moor or morrland, an endemic ecosystem, key in the water cycles of Equinoctial South America. In Santurbán, there are different layers such as moist <i>páramo</i> in erosional structural mountain, wet wasteland in gravitational flume mountain, humid <i>páramo</i> in glacial mountain or highly humid <i>páramo</i> in glacial mountain.
<i>Paramuno</i>	Hailing from the <i>páramos</i> .

<i>Playones</i>	In swamp areas, islands of flat, dry lands.
<i>Pochocho</i>	A small type of sweet banana.
<i>Ramadas</i>	Stockpiles of sheaves of wheat mown and ready for threshing.
<i>Raizal(es)</i>	Native, with roots in a region.
<i>Resguardos</i>	Indigenous reservations.
<i>Revuelto</i>	In the Caribbean coast: staples that accompany lunch.
<i>Ruana</i>	A type of loose rectangular poncho without sleeves with a hole in the centre to place the head.
<i>Sentipensante</i>	Analyses and visions which are the product of thinking and feeling.
<i>Serranía</i>	A small low mountain range.
<i>Subpáramo</i>	Altitude zones of vegetation between the limit of the Andean Forest and the <i>páramo</i> vegetation. In Santurbán there are layers of moist <i>subpáramo</i> in erosional structural mountain, wet <i>subpáramo</i> in fluvio-gravitational mountain, wet <i>subpáramo</i> in glacial mountain, very humid <i>subpáramo</i> in erosional structural mountain, very humid <i>subpáramo</i> in gravitational flume mountain and very humid <i>subpáramo</i> in glacial mountain.
<i>Tabloneros</i>	Someone who under oral or written contract receives a coffee plantation (called <i>tablón</i>) to manage it in company with the farm (with the administrator or the owner).
<i>Tapapinche</i>	Loincloth, apron made for coffee growers.
<i>Terrateniente</i>	Owner and lord of a land, usually a capitalist, hoarder and oppressor of men, women and Nature.
<i>Ulmaria</i>	Elm-like plant, <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , meadowsweet.
<i>Vereda</i>	Countryside segment where a group of peasants have their lands and live.
<i>Yerbabuena</i>	Used for spearmint (<i>Mentha spicata</i>) and <i>Satureja douglasii</i> , a plant relative of mint.
<i>Zafra</i>	The <i>zafra</i> s are a cappella songs interpreted by peasants while they pick the harvest.

List of acronyms

ANUC	<i>Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos</i> (National Association of Peasant Users)
ANZORC	<i>Asociación Nacional de Zonas de Reserva Campesina</i> (National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones)
ASOPALMA	<i>Asociación de Palmicultores del Distrito de Marialabaja</i> (Association of Palm Growers of the Marialabaja Irrigation District)
ANT	<i>Agencia Nacional de Tierras</i> (National Lands Agency, Former INCORA – INCODER)
CAB	Communal Action Boards
CAS	Critical Agrarian Studies
CCL	Coffee Cultural Landscape
CEDETRABAJO	Colombian Centre of Economic Studies on Labour
CENICAFE	National Coffee Research Centre
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency of the United States
CIDA	<i>Comité Interamericano de Desarrollo Agrícola</i> (Inter-American Committee on Agricultural Development)
CIDOS	Centre for Social Research and Documentation
CDMB	<i>Corporación Autónoma Regional para la Defensa de la Meseta de Bucaramanga</i> (Regional Autonomous Corporation for the Defence of the Bucaramanga Plateau)
CAN	<i>Coordinador Nacional Agrario</i> (National Agrarian Coordination for the Peasant, Ethnic and Popular Summit)
Col-ICA	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Agricultura</i> (Colombian Institute of Agriculture, Original acronym: ICA)
Colciencias	Colombian Academy of Sciences
CONPES	<i>[Documento de] El Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social</i> ([Document of the] National Council of Economic and Social Politics)
CORPONOR	<i>Corporación Autónoma Regional de la Frontera Nororiental</i> (Regional Autonomous Corporation of the North-Eastern Border)
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CRIC	<i>Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca</i> (Cauca Regional Indigenous Council)
CSJB	<i>Complejo de Páramos Jurisdicciones – Santurbán – Berlín</i> (Santurbán-Berlín Páramo Moorland Complex)
DANE	<i>Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística</i> (National Administrative Department of Statistics)
DMI-Berlín	<i>Distrito de Manejo Integrado de Recursos Naturales del Páramo de Berlín</i> (District for Integrated Management of the Natural Resources of the Berlín Páramo Moorland)
DPN	<i>Departamento Nacional de Planeación</i> (National Planning Department)
DRI	<i>Programa de Desarrollo Rural Integrado</i> (Integrated Rural Development Plan)
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ENSO	El Niño–Southern Oscillation
ELN	<i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i> (National Liberation Army), a Colombian guerrilla group

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias</i> de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), a former Colombian guerrilla group
FEDEARROZ	National Federation of Colombian Rice Growers (Guild organisation)
FEDECAFÉ	National Federation of Coffee Growers (Guild organisation)
FEDEGÁN	National Federation of Cattle Ranchers (Guild organisation)
FEDEPALMA	National Federation of Oil Growers (Guild organisation)
FEDEPAPA	National Federation of Potato Growers (Guild organisation)
FENALCE	National Federation of Cereal, Legume and Soy Growers (Guild organisation)
FENALCO	National Federation of Merchants (Guild organisation)
Finagro	Fund for financing the agricultural sector
FNC	<i>Fondo Nacional del Café</i> (National Coffee Fund)
FSN	Food Security Network
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
G4AW	Geodata for Agriculture and Water
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Green House Gases
HIMAT	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Hidrología, Meteorología y Adecuación de Tierras</i> (Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology, Land Adaptation and Environmental Studies)
HY	High Yields
HYC	High Yield Crops
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IAvH	Alexander von Humboldt Institute on Biological Resource Research
ICA	International Coffee Agreement
ICANH	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia</i> (Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History)
ICBF	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar</i> (Colombian Family Welfare Institute)
ICR	<i>Incentivo a la Capitalización Rural</i> (Incentive for Rural Capitalisation)
IDEAM	<i>Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales</i> (Colombian Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies), former HIMAT
IDEMA	<i>Instituto de Mercadeo Agropecuario</i> (Institute of Agrarian Market), former INA
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IGAC	Agustín Codazzi Geographical Institute – Colombia
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILSA	Latin American Institute for an Alternative Society and Law
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INA	<i>Instituto Nacional Agrario</i> (National Agrarian Institute)
INAT	<i>Instituto Nacional de Adecuación de Tierras</i> (National Institute of Land Adaptations)
INCORA	<i>Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria</i> (Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform)
INCODER	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Desarrollo Rural</i> (Colombian Institute of Rural Development, former INCORA)
INDEPAZ	Institute of Studies for Development and Peace

INN	<i>Intituto Nacional de Nutrición</i> (Colombian National Institute of Nutrition)
INPA	<i>Instituto Nacional de Pesca y Agricultura</i> (National Institute of Fishing and Aquaculture)
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISI	Import Substitution Industrialisation
JAC	<i>Juntas de Acción Comunal</i> (Communal Action Boards)
JEP	<i>Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz</i> (Special Court of Peace)
M-19	<i>Movimiento 19 de abril</i> (19 th April Movement), a former Colombian guerrilla group
MADR	<i>Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural</i> (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development)
MADS	<i>Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible</i> (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development)
OCMCC	<i>Oficina Colombiana para la Mitigación del Cambio Climático</i> (Colombian Office for Climate Change Mitigation)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PCC	<i>Partido Comunista Colombiano</i> (Colombian Communist Party)
PCN	<i>Proceso de Comunidades Negras</i> (The Process of Black Communities)
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
PINA	<i>Programa Integrado de Nutrición Aplicada</i> (Integrated Programs of Applied Nutrition)
PL	Public Law
PRT	<i>Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores</i> (Revolutionary Party of the Workers)
PSAN	<i>Política de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutrición</i> (National Food and Nutrition Security Policy)
PSR	<i>Partido Socialista Revolucionario</i> (Revolutionary Socialist Party)
RUV	<i>Registro Único de Víctimas</i> (Unique Victims' Register)
RRI	<i>Reforma Rural Integral</i> (Integral Rural Reform), first chapter of the 2016 Peace Accord between the Colombian Government and the FARC guerrilla group
SAC	<i>Sociedad de Agricultores de Colombia</i> (Colombian Agriculturists Society)
SAR	Social and Agrarian Reform (Colombian law 135/1961)
SET	Social Ecology Theory
SIC	<i>Secretaría de Industria y Comercio</i> (Industry and Commerce Secretary)
STACA	Colombian American Agricultural Technical Service
UAF	<i>Unidad Agrícola Familiar</i> (Familial Agrarian Unit)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDROP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants
UNIR	<i>Unión Nacional de Izquierda Revolucionaria</i> (Leftist Revolutionary Union)
UPOV	International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZRC	<i>Zonas de Reserva Campesina</i> (Peasant Reserve Zones)

INTRODUCTION

A way to end a social group is to erase its history. Groups that have governed the Republic of Colombia have named the peasantry with strange social categories, with the purpose of denying their existence as a social class who creates wealth for the country, and as a subject of rights, appropriating their goods and work.¹

Robert Daza (Colombian peasant leader)

I try to develop... a critical position that's fit for the crises of our time. But it has to start with the recognition that some people do actually want to be peasants... and their number is likely to increase.²

Chris Smaje (British sociologist and small farmer)

This thesis celebrates the 'peoples of the land' in Colombia and their history of resistance to reforms which have put at risk their agri-food culture and connection with non-human life.³ It therefore begins with the fundamental acknowledgment of their existence as who they state they are: peasants. Colombian peasants self-identify as *campesinas* and *campesinos* in Spanish but also as 'peasants' in English, being members of the global peasant movement '*La Vía Campesina*' (the peasant way).⁴ This is the main reason why this thesis, which adopts decolonial practices, uses the word 'peasants' instead of *campesinos*: to not merely present translated testimonies but also to transmit the urgency – and even agitation – of their message. By reclaiming the English term 'peasant' to represent themselves, peasants from many different nationalities, including Colombian, position themselves as part of a global movement. They demand global recognition and seek to challenge contemporary global norms, based predominantly on Western conventions, that marginalise people who work the land as remote, disempowered, and belonging

¹ Robert Daza, "La Lucha Por El Reconocimiento Del Campesinado Como Sujeto de Derechos," *Semillas*, December 2019, 3.

² Chris Smaje, "The Return of the Peasant," in *A Small Farm Future: Making the Case for a Society Built around Local Economies, Self-Provisioning, Agricultural Diversity, and a Shared Earth* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2020), 95.

³ The expression 'peoples of the land' summarises the peasant grassroots movements' self-definition. From Edelman's study commissioned by the UN: "The umbrella concept central to *Vía Campesina*'s definition of 'peasant' is 'people of the land'." Marc Edelman, "What Is a Peasant? What Are Peasantries? A Briefing Paper on Issues of Definition," 2013, 10.

⁴ Various Colombian peasant organisations, including the agrarian reform users ANUC, repeatedly mentioned in this thesis, have either signed or subscribed the Mons Declaration by *La Vía Campesina*, claiming to be 'peasants' Norges Bondelag (NB) - Norway et al., "Mons Declaration" (Mons, Belgium: *La Vía Campesina*, 1993), 4.

to the past rather than the future. This thesis recognises these contemporary peasants as both historical subjects and agential actors in contemporary Colombian society and agriculture.

Peasant agriculture, small farming and artisan fisheries currently produce between seventy and eighty per cent of humanity's food worldwide.⁵ Although many of them have difficulties to be entirely sustainable, they farm with a care for the environment and local communities that capitalist corporative agriculture focused on the profit maximisation and accumulation does not demonstrate. These peasant agricultural practices are therefore of vital importance to humanity's survival, as is the respect of food rights. This thesis reviews the global and local policies, and corporative agricultural practices, which have threatened peasant agriculture's existence in three Colombian sub-regions from 1961 to 2013. This thesis uses comparative case studies to argue that many agrarian reforms throughout the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century in Colombia acted instead as counter-reforms, contributing to depeasantisation, the loss of communities' food sovereignty – and consequently their food security – and causing negative impacts on the environment.

Even though there is no current agreement on the concepts of peasants and peasantry among academics, Colombian peasants have exercised their “capacity of conceiving themselves”.⁶ I feel humbled by an article written by peasant leader Rober Daza for the *Semillas* Journal, celebrating the achievement of consensus on a definition of peasantry with the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH) in 2019, from which I extracted the opening quote. There, he reflects on the peasantry as a ‘social category’ being replaced by expressions such as small farmers or rural workers, particularly in the late twentieth century, and denounces the general refusal to ‘name them’ properly as an attempt to erase them. This thesis argues that this and other forms of erasing peasantries and diminishing their food sovereignty and environmental rights have been highly connected to, or driven by, global and local agri-food policies.

⁵ ETC Group, *Who Will Feed Us?: The Peasant Food Web vs. the Industrial Food Chain* (ETC Group, 2017).

⁶ Odile Hoffmann, “Divergencias Construidas, Convergencias Por Construir. Identidad, Territorio y Gobierno En La Ruralidad Colombiana,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 52, no. 1 (January 2016): 19.

This thesis' journey started with the question: how have agrarian reforms and counter-reforms affected Colombian peasantries since the 1961 Social and Agrarian Reform (SAR) and until the 2013 Great Peasant Strike? However, this evolved with the increasing incorporation of peasant voices into more than another agrarian question study. Through this investigation and inspired by this thesis' interviewees, I have also found links between peasants' understanding of what they call their own 'nature' (essence) and the way they connect with Nature (landscape). A few participants referred also to Nature as *Pachamama* or Mother Nature, a term used by many communities in Latin America. As such, following Gudynas I capitalise Nature to evidence these peasants' respect to it as a major living being.⁷ The deep relation between these peasantries and Nature is both physical and affective, and is further discussed in the critical concepts section of this introduction under the concept of 'radical relationality'. Peasants' relation to Nature and food is primarily found through a tangible metabolic tie to the space of the farm. The direct consequence of a series of agrarian reforms with counter-reformist effects was a change – even a break – of that bond and its metabolic balance, affecting both peasants and Nature.

As a work that privileges peasant voices, this thesis starts by joining Daza, a Colombian peasant representative, in acknowledging Colombian peasants' presence and relevance, not only as historical subjects but also as fundamental agents in the research and in the development of just and sustainable food systems. I use the term 'peasants' in this research in line with Critical Agrarian Studies, but mainly following my archival and oral sources, as an "expression of academic resistance" which mirrors, at least in part, peasant global and national struggles.⁸ This can be read in two ways: as a contribution to the decolonisation of the disciplines involved, such as environmental history, agrarian studies and food studies; and as a radical critique to the 'depeasantisation' of the English language itself, which I recognise and use as

⁷ On Nature with a capital N, this is adapted from Gudynas: "the environment where landscape, fauna and flora have none or low human intervention". Do not mistake it for Moore's 'Nature' which is a colonial concept, it is probably closer to Moore's 'nature': web of life. Eduardo Gudynas, *Derechos de la naturaleza y políticas ambientales* (Bogotá: Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis, 2014), 28; Jason W. Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016).

⁸ Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries: Rural Development in Times of Globalization*, Second Edition, Earthscan Food and Agriculture (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 24.

the predominant language in global academia. 'Peasantries' as a concept will be further discussed in depth within the critical concepts section of this introduction, along with depeasantisation and food sovereignty.

The second opening quote comes from Chris Smaje, the first British author I encountered who uses the word 'peasants' in a positive light within a contemporary context. He reflects on peasant agriculture as being key in tackling current crises, such as those that caused and were created by the novel coronavirus in 2020, and which are largely related to the unsustainability of some of our present agri-food systems. The Covid-19 pandemic has reignited transdisciplinary debates around the survival and sustainability of the basic systems maintaining human life, including food, with Covid-19 being a zoonotic disease spread through the industrial food chain.⁹ This thesis was largely written during the pandemic, a period when surviving peasantries were called 'heroes' in Colombia, because they kept providing food while big platforms exhibited empty shelves. Producing food locally and in 'ecological conviviality' with our planet, as Smaje maintains, might be a key part of the possible "best future now available" for humanity.¹⁰

This project started with a single hypothesis about agrarian reforms and policies: that some might have had negative impacts on peasantries and their landscape over time. Thanks to in-depth fieldwork and peasantries' cooperation, however, this basic notion was enriched with a more radical and original perspective. This thesis initially discussed the agrarian question as a land tenure debate but, responding to grassroots memories and peasant knowledge, it gradually became refocused around the 'peasant food question' and evolved to reflect upon the key transformations experienced by peoples and their territories – territory being the expression they choose rather than landscape. By acknowledging that I aim to honour subaltern voices. I am also aware of the

⁹ See Christophe Béné et al., "Global Assessment of the Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security," *Global Food Security*, September 2021, 100575 (1-9); Jennifer Clapp and William G. Moseley, "This Food Crisis Is Different: COVID-19 and the Fragility of the Neoliberal Food Security Order," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 47, no. 7 (November 9, 2020): 1393–1417; IPES-Food, "COVID-19 and the Crisis in Food Systems: Symptoms, Causes, and Potential Solutions," Communiqué by IPES-Food, 2020, http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/COVID-19_CommuniqueEN.pdf; Fereidoon Shahidi, "Does COVID-19 Affect Food Safety and Security?," *Journal of Food Bioactives* 9 (March 31, 2020); Charis M. Galanakis, "The Food Systems in the Era of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic Crisis," *Foods* 9, no. 4 (April 22, 2020): 523.

¹⁰ Smaje, "The Return of the Peasant," 10.

risks of 'peasant essentialism' and 'provincialism', two well recognised ghosts in the production of Latin American histories. However, as with various academics who preceded me, I rely on the strength of my methodology based on environmental history and a highly interdisciplinary conceptual framework to overcome that challenge.

With regards to the potential 'provincialism' claim, it is worth adding that this historicization of food sovereignty, landscape, and peasantry uses an analytical framework which allows the traceability of agri-food policies from the global to the very local levels of the three Colombian sub-regions of study. In such a diverse country focusing on one case-study might not be conclusive; therefore this project took three highly different sub-regions with socio-culturally different peasantries, namely the low-lands of Los Montes de María, the slopes of the coffee zone and the highlands of the Santurbán *páramo*. This thesis presents the first comparative analysis of these three dissimilar peasant landscapes, providing a practical contribution from the Colombian context to multiple discussions across multiple disciplines including agrarian, social and environmental history and/or agrarian, food and rural development studies.

A Latin American country with the characteristics of Colombia has immense potential for environmental historical research and the study of highly diverse peasant cultures and landscapes during the Cold War and after. Colombia's richness as a case study has been overlooked until very recently, primarily due to the country's long civil war. The peace agreement signed with one of the world's longest active guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) at the end of 2016 has opened new opportunities for research. Colombia is recognised as one of the most mega-biodiverse countries in the world – with a resultant high agrodiversity – and it is one of the oldest Latin American democracies.¹¹ It is also, however, a country with the second highest Gini index of wealth inequality in South America, the highest

¹¹ See Natalia Valderrama et al., "Reporte de estado de la biodiversidad - especies amenazadas de fauna y flora," Biodiversity 2014 - Status Report (Colombia: Institute of Biological Resources Research Alexander von Humboldt, 2014), <http://reporte.humboldt.org.co/biodiversidad2014/visualizador/201>; Steven L. Taylor, *Voting amid Violence: Electoral Democracy in Colombia*, Northeastern Series on Democratization and Political Development (Boston : Hanover [N.H.]: Northeastern University Press, 2009); Jorge P. Osterling, *Democracy in Colombia: Clientelist Politics and Guerrilla Warfare* (New Brunswick, U.S.A: Transaction, 1989).

land distribution inequality in the region, and the second highest number of internally displaced persons – mostly peasants – globally.¹²

Since the 1930s, Colombian liberal reformists have tried and failed to consolidate sustainable agrarian transformations through land redistribution policies that aimed to reconcile landlords and peasant tenants. Export-oriented plantations of tropical products advanced the growth of agro-industrial land use, mainly in the lowlands. By 1960, rural Colombia was a collage of sub-regions with varied dominant land tenure models and forms of agriculture, as well as diverse peasant communities. For this reason, to understand the implications of agrarian reforms and policies adopted nationally and the long-term transformations in different local contexts, this thesis adopts a comparative analysis of three different sub-regions. For the first time, peasantries' histories from these three very dissimilar sub-regions are analysed in parallel: Los Montes de María, a Caribbean warm land; the Coffee Axis, a temperate land in the Eastern Andean slopes; and Santurbán in the north-eastern Andean highlands. The purpose of this research is to assess the alterations in their peasantries and landscapes caused by the combined outcomes of historical land use, rural development policies, and conflicts over rural resources. This analysis reveals patterns and similar impacts – as well as differences – in local responses to national and international policies. The common consequences of agrarian counter-reforms – although not necessarily simultaneous, and occurring at different levels – hold the most interest for this study.

As a work of interdisciplinary environmental historical research, this thesis recognises both the peasantry and their territory as historical subjects, both being victims of agrarian counter-reforms. It also recognises peasant 'territories' as socio and agro-ecological units with a relationality that runs beyond political-administrative borders. This revisionist interpretation counters orthodox historiographical narratives where peasants are either treated as unruly and violent actors or as anachronic, poor, ignorant and low-class agrarian labourers. To do so, its analysis draws from sustainable agro-ecological management and peasants' rights approaches to farming, focusing

¹² Gini Index information taken from: World Bank, "GINI Index (World Bank Estimate)." On the land Gini Coefficient see: Oxfam, "Radiografía de la desigualdad"; IGAC and CEDE, *Atlas de la distribución de la propiedad rural en Colombia*.

on peasant agency and food sovereignty as the desirable form of food security encompassing peasants' rights.

The practical implications of this study's findings might potentially be of vital importance for the nation's peasantries, and more broadly could contribute to discussions around food production history and food systems, as well as peasant studies in Latin America and globally. This thesis delivers an historical analysis that provides context and longitudinal data that can inform contemporary debates on improving policy decisions, which affect not only the food security of peasant communities engaged in agriculture but also our global food systems. This is crucial to building a post-Covid 'new normal' with safer, more inclusive, socially just and sustainable use of natural resources.

Key Arguments

This thesis mainly argues that although agrarian reforms and policies between 1961 and 2013 in Colombia were promoted as designs to assist and provide for peasantries, in some cases they have had the opposite impacts:

depeasantisation, food sovereignty loss and environmental degradation.

Focusing in three different sub-regions of the country, this thesis demonstrates that factors such as international developmentalist and neoliberal interventions as well as national structural factors, such as colonial legacies, agrarian resource conflicts, contradictory market-led policies and forced displacement all acted as counter-reforms which triggered processes of depeasantisation. They were also often associated with cycles of peasant food instability and dispossession, and consequent periods of scarcity, hunger, and a loss of a peasant praxis, heritage, culinary culture, social cohesion and agricultural traditions. These factors not only had an impact on peasant societies: they were also connected to disruptive landscape transformations in the three sub-regions of study, such as engineered flooding of peasant settlements, deforestation, endangerment of endemic ecosystems and advance of new pathogens.

A second argument of this thesis involves the twofold character of top-down counter-reformist policies as being both neo-colonial and internally colonial. They were influenced, promoted and even pushed by international interests, which makes them neo-colonial; at the same time, they were used by local elite structures to reproduce colonial relations of power and oppression, sometimes with anti-peasant agendas. Furthermore, they have exercised

influence over some peasantries more than others. Those peasantries, who have carried within themselves an inherited internal patriarchal colonialism, were turned into agents of their own depeasantisation and socio-Nature break.

Finally, this thesis also argues for the need for a true integral and peasant agrarian reform involving peasants' participation with decision-making capacity and democratising resources and power for the peasantries' survival.

Literature Review

	History	Development studies	Sociology	Ecology		
1960s-1970s	Regional histories (Parsons, Palacios M)	Agrarian (peasant) history (Bejarano)	Rural development and dependency theory (Barraclough)	Peasant Studies (Shanin) Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Fals-Borda)	Conservationism and criticism of Green Revolution (Carson)	
1980s-1990s	Regional histories (Posada Carbó, Colmenares)	Peasant women, women's labour history (de Leal, Deere)	Agrarian question. Landlord-peasant conflict (LeGrand) Economic history of agriculture (Kalmanovitz, Palacios) Food History (Patiño-Rodríguez, Nussio and Pernet)	Agrarian/ Peasant Studies (Kay)	Historical memory and decolonisation (Rivera-Cusicanqui) Critical Agrarian Studies (CAS), Food political economy (Friedmann, McMichael)	
2000s	Environmental history (Ochoa, Palacio)	Women's labour history (from anthropology, Meertens) (Coffee labour, Ramirez Bacca)	Agrarian question. Land distribution (Fajardo M) Agri-food history (Machado)	Agrarian question (Akram-Lodhi)	CAS, Peasant Studies (Bryceson)	Socio-Ecological Theory (SET) (Fischer-Kowalski, González de Molina)
2010s	Environmental history (Leal, McCook, Cuvi, Soluri, Gallini, Guhl A)	Historical memory (CNMH, Reyes Posada, Sánchez, Wills)	Land distribution [inequality] history (from economic history: Faguet, Villaveces) (from political sciences: Gutiérrez) (political economic history: Richani, Uribe-López)	Social change for sustainability. Degrowth (Feola)	Peasant Studies, CAS (Bryceson, van der Ploeg)	Socio-Ecological Theory (SET), Economic history (Martínez-Alier) Social ecology (Gudynas, Lee & Newfont)

Table 1. Main literature bodies that feed, inspire and dialogue with this thesis.

This thesis interrogates agrarian reforms and policies which have claimed to benefit the peasantry, but which it argues in practice had the opposite effects in the case study sub-regions, evidenced using environmental historical methods. It also analyses these findings under the light of such concepts as depeasantisation, food sovereignty and environmental justice. These concepts are drawn from – and dialogue with – a range of disciplines of knowledge, including not only historical research but also rural development studies and social studies, especially the sociologists and scholars of peasant studies, today more commonly known as Critical Agrarian Studies (CAS) (see table 1). This thesis, then, is highly interdisciplinary; it also engages with food studies and sustainable agriculture literatures from a biosciences' perspective, and was influenced by such concepts as social metabolism and socio-ecosystems from Social Ecology Theory (SET). My research therefore relies on and contributes to the four main literature bodies displayed in the table above. Some will be considered in this section, and some will be considered in the conceptual discussion in the following section.

The seminal works in the agricultural history of Colombia have been concerned mainly with economic history and export-oriented products, such as those by Kalmanovitz and Palacios.¹³ In terms of history of food production and consumption specifically, the extensive contribution by Patiño-Rodríguez, who pioneered the history of agrarian investigation and technification is considered the most comprehensive.¹⁴ These eminent historical productions, however, place all their attention on productivity/profitability, reproducing notions of a technified industrial agriculture superiority over native and agrodiverse peasant production. In other words, these scholars might have underestimated the

¹³ Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850–1970: An Economic, Social, and Political History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Salomón Kalmanovitz and Enrique López E., *La agricultura colombiana en el siglo XX*, 1. ed, Sección de Obras de Economía (Bogotá: Fondo de Cultura Económica : Banco de la República, 2006).

¹⁴ Víctor Manuel Patiño Rodríguez, *Historia de la cultura material en la América equinoccial. T. 1: Alimentación y alimentos*, 2. ed, Biblioteca básica de cocinas tradicionales de Colombia 1 (Bogotá: Ministerio de Cultura, 2012); Víctor Manuel Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*, La Granada Entreavierta 92 (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 2002); Víctor Manuel Patiño Rodríguez, *La alimentación en Colombia y en los países vecinos*, 2. ed, Colección Clásicos Regionales (Cali, Colombia: Universidad del Valle, 2005); Víctor Manuel Patiño Rodríguez and CIAT, *Historia y dispersión de los frutales nativos del neotrópico* (Cali, Colombia: Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical CIAT, 2002); Víctor Manuel Patiño Rodríguez, "Historia de la botánica y de las ciencias afines en Colombia," in *Historia extensa de Colombia*, ed. Luis Martínez Delgado and Academia Colombiana de Historia, vol. 16 (Bogotá: Ediciones Lerner, 1985), 255.

importance of peasantries for life's reproduction and the preservation of agroecosystems' health and diversity.

Colombian peasant histories have been mainly regionally-based, developed by authors of the New History of Colombia who subscribed to the *Annales* school.¹⁵ However, they understood regions as being circumscribed within administrative frontiers, such as provinces dating from the Spanish domination, giving a socio-political nuance to their narrations.¹⁶ Key authors such as LeGrand and Parsons dealt with rural conflicts involving peasant settler colonisations, historicizing processes of peasantisation in their regions or sub-regions of study.¹⁷ These stories were focused on migration and confrontation and overlooked the associated landscape transformations. They documented the tradition of peasants being *colonos*: the 'first' cultivators farming a vacant land.¹⁸ Nature and women were however hidden from these readings until rural histories with gender perspective, written by Deere, de Leal and Ramírez-Bacca, filled this gap.¹⁹

Substantial approaches to Nature and landscape as well as communities as historical subjects have emerged more recently from environmental

¹⁵ Alvaro Tirado Mejía et al., eds., *Nueva historia de Colombia* (Bogotá, D.E: Planeta, 1989).

¹⁶ Germán Colmenares, *Encomienda y población en la provincia de Pamplona (1549-1650)*, 1999; Germán Colmenares, "Cauca's Slave Economy," in *The Colombia Reader*, ed. Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, Marco Palacios, and Ana María Gómez López, trans. Ana María Gómez López and Ann Farnsworth-Alvear (Duke University Press, 2016), 446–49; Alvaro Tirado Mejía et al., eds., *Nueva historia de Colombia. VIII = [10]: Economía y regiones* (Santafé de Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Ed, 1998); Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, Juan Friede, and Luis Duque Gómez, *History of Pereira* (Pereira, Colombia: Club Rotario de Pereira, 1963).

¹⁷ Catherine LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta campesina en Colombia (1850-1950)* (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes, Ediciones Uniandes, 2016); Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936*, 1st ed (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986); James Jerome Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia: An Historical Geography* (Berkeley: University of California, 1949).

¹⁸ The first inhabitants were indigenous cultures which by the time of peasant colonisations were already congregated by the Spanish administration in *resguardos* (indigenous reserves).

¹⁹ Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena León de Leal, "Peasant Production, Proletarianization, and the Sexual Division of Labor in the Andes," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 2 (December 1981): 338–60; Magdalena León de Leal and Carmen Diana Deere, "Estudio de la mujer rural y el desarrollo del capitalismo en el agro colombiano," *Demografía y Economía* 12, no. 1 (1978): 4–36; Renzo Ramírez Bacca, *Historia laboral de una hacienda cafetera: La Aurora, 1882-1982*, 1. ed, La carrera histórica (Medellín, Colombia: Carrera Editores E.U. : Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Medellín : Grupo de Investigación Historia, Trabajo, Sociedad y Cultura, 2008); Renzo Ramírez Bacca, "Women in Colombian Traditional Coffee Growing, 1910-1970," *Historia y MEMORIA*, no. 10 (January 2015): 43–73; Renzo Ramírez Bacca, "Tabloneras, escogedoras y recolectoras en la caficultura colombiana, 1910-1970," in *XVIII Congreso de La Asociación de Colombianistas* ("La mujer en Colombia," Fitchburg State University, Regis College, Massachusetts: Asociación de Colombianistas, 2013).

historians such as Claudia Leal and Germán Palacio, although in their works the peasantries and food production are reduced to mere circumstantial roles.

So far, this literature reviewed has appraised traditional history and archival research. However, peasant history in Colombia has seen great value in less orthodox approaches. Scholars such as Orlando Fals-Borda, León Zamosc and Antonio Bejarano could be considered 'peasantists': they cultivated a growing interest in peasant cultures and agrarian questions in harmony with the 'historical conjuncture' created by the end of the period known as '*La Violencia*', the agrarian reforms coming with the Alliance for Progress and the international academic interest shown in peasantry by international intellectuals.²⁰ I consider that Zamosc's work remains the most complete on the history of the peasant organisation 'National Association of Peasant Users' (ANUC) and its achievements; therefore, it extensively informs this thesis.²¹ The economist Antonio Bejarano also deserves attention; he offered one of the first peasantist approaches to agrarian history in Colombia.²² However, it was with Fals-Borda, creator of Participatory Action Research (PAR), that peasant voices gained relevance for the first time in the historiography as co-investigators.²³ His methods generated strong criticism among colleagues – including Berquist, who

²⁰ Orlando Fals Borda, *Peasant Society in the Colombian Andes: A Sociological Study of Saucío* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1976); Orlando Fals Borda, *El desarrollo social y la reforma agraria*, ICIRA 37 (Santiago de Chile: Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación en Reforma Agraria ICIRA/FAO, 1965); Jesús Antonio Bejarano, *Ensayos de historia agraria colombiana*, 1a ed, Serie Historia Contemporánea, no. 6 (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1987). On international scholars influences, we can mention works such as: Albert O. Hirschman, *Land Reform and Social Change in Colombia* (National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va, 1963); Shanin, *Peasants and Peasant Societies*; Juan Friede, "Orígenes de la propiedad territorial en América," *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 3, no. 11 (1960): 717–20; Thomas Lynn Smith, *Colombia: Social Structure and the Process of Development* (Gainesville : University of Florida Press, 1967).

²¹ León Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia: Struggles of the National Peasant Association, 1967-1981*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 58 (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York : Geneva, Switzerland: Cambridge University Press ; United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1986).

²² Jesús Antonio Bejarano, "Campesinado, luchas agrarias e historia social: notas para un balance historiográfico," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura* 0, no. 11 (January 1, 1983): 251–304; Jesús Antonio Bejarano, *Ensayos de historia agraria colombiana*, 1a ed, Serie Historia Contemporánea, no. 6 (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial CEREC, 1987).

²³ José Gutiérrez, "Participatory Action Research (PAR) and the Colombian Peasant Reserve Zones: The Legacy of Orlando Fals Borda," *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review* 22 (Spring 2016): 59–76; Orlando Fals Borda, "The North-South Convergence: A 30-Year First-Person Assessment of PAR," *Action Research* 4, no. 3 (September 2006): 351–58; Orlando Fals Borda, *El problema de como investigar la realidad para transformarla por la praxis*, 8th ed. (Bogota: Tercer Mundo, 1990); Jafte Dilean Robles Lomeli and Joanne Rappaport, "Imagining Latin American Social Science from the Global South: Orlando Fals Borda and Participatory Action Research," *Latin American Research Review* 53, no. 3 (September 28, 2018): 597–612.

suggested that his bias led to a flawed management of sources.²⁴ These criticisms are, in my view, unfounded, as Fals-Borda's findings were widely supported by archival sources and proper interrogation of historical memories collected. Oral history for Fals-Borda was key to writing a 'living history' rather than a 'dead history', addressing not only the academic audience but also the co-authoring communities.²⁵ He was also very open about his biases.²⁶ His *Cuestión Agraria*, *La Violencia* and the *Historia Doble* fieldwork left a vast collection of interviews with peasants, photographs, intimate correspondence and notes which are now in the custody of the *Universidad Nacional* Archives and the *Banco de la República* (Bank of the Republic). These secondary-use collections constitute very rich material for historians and provided significant evidence for this thesis.

One form of oral history in Colombia has been the historical works produced by expert commissions to determine the origin of social conflicts in rural areas, including the 1962 Investigatory Commission of "*La Violencia*" in which Fals-Borda participated.²⁷ The most recent and prolific oral history projects within Colombia resulted from the creation of the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* (National Centre of Historical Memory, CNMH).²⁸ The CNMH's work covers various forms of violence against peasants, including

²⁴ Charles Bergquist, "In the Name of History: A Disciplinary Critique of Orlando Fals Borda's *Historia Doble de La Costa*," *Latin American Research Review* 25, no. 3 (1990): 156–76.

²⁵ Orlando Fals Borda, "Comentarios a la mesa redonda sobre la historia doble de la Costa," *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de La Cultura* 16–17 (1989): 231–40.

²⁶ See Orlando Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia*, Publicaciones de la Rosca (Bogotá, Colombia: Fundación Rosca de Investigación y Acción Social, 1975).

²⁷ Robert A. Karl, *Forgotten Peace: Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2017).

²⁸ A sample of their works: CNMH, *La política de reforma agraria y tierras en Colombia*, CNMH Reports (Bogotá, Colombia: CNMH, 2013); CNMH, *A Displaced Nation* (Bogotá, Colombia: CNMH, 2015); Alejandro Reyes Posada, Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez, and Camila Medina Arbeláez, *Tierras. Balance de la contribución del CNMH al esclarecimiento histórico*, Primera edición (Bogotá, Colombia: CNMH, 2018); María Emma Wills Obregón, *Los tres nudos de la guerra colombiana: un campesinado sin representación política, una polarización social en el marco de una institucionalidad fracturada, y unas articulaciones perversas entre regiones y centro* (Bogotá, Colombia: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica CNMH, 2015); CNMH, *Campesinos de tierra y agua: memorias sobre sujeto colectivo, trayectoria organizativa, daño y expectativas de reparación colectiva en la Región Caribe 1960-2015. Introducción – Metodología y conclusiones generales del trabajo de investigación*, ed. Carmen Andrea Becerra Becerra and John Jairo Rincón García (Bogotá, Colombia: CNMH, 2017); CNMH, *Arraigo y resistencia. Dignidad campesina en la Región Caribe (1972-2015)* (Bogotá, Colombia: CNMH, 2015); CNRR, ed., *¡Basta ya! Colombia, memorias de guerra y dignidad: informe general*, Segunda edición corregida (Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013); Carmen Andrea Becerra Becerra et al., *Un bosque de memoria viva: desde la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar* (Bogotá, Colombia: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016).

failed agrarian reforms, displacement, land and water conflicts, violations of children and women's rights, and land grabbing. These studies provide corroboratory evidence for this thesis.²⁹

The few works on food security and food sovereignty history in Colombia come from developmentalist studies and other social sciences. Nussio and Pernet, for instance, studied food security programmes in Colombia between 1970 and 2010, and evidenced that both agrarian reform and nutrition have ceased to be state priorities in the last two decades. Although they recognised the existence of a food sovereignty debate, their paper does not mention the peasantry at all.³⁰ By contrast, the extensive research of Machado-Cartagena – creator of the Food Security Network (FSN) projects in Colombia – connects failed agrarian reforms, food insecurity and neglected peasantry.³¹ He concludes that in order to achieve food security, Colombia should adopt not a traditional agrarian reform but an integral rural reform to satisfy a ‘historical debt’ with the peasantry, with his views informing the agrarian reform chapter in the 2016 Peace Agreement.³² Fajardo has also been an important contributor to this discussion, connecting agricultural policies with food and nutrition in the Colombian history.³³ Both Machado and Fajardo considered sustainability in

²⁹ CNMH, *A Displaced Nation*; Rocío Londoño Botero and CNMH, *Tierras y conflictos rurales: historia, políticas agrarias y protagonistas*, 2016; CNMH, “*Patrones*” y *campesinos: tierra, poder y violencia en el Valle del Cauca (1960-2012)*, ed. Tatiana Peláez Acevedo (Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2014); Gonzalo Sánchez, *Documetary: “No hubo tiempo para la tristeza”*, documentary film, Basta ya! (Bogota, Colombia: CNMH, Concepto Visual, 2013); CNMH, *The Agrarian Reform and Land Policy*; Hernán Darío Correa and CNRR, eds., *La tierra en disputa: memorias de despojo y resistencia campesina en la Costa Caribe, 1960-2010*, Primera edición en Colombia, Pensamiento (Bogotá, Colombia: Taurus, 2010); Mario Aguilera Peña and CNRR, eds., *El orden desarmado: la resistencia de la Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos de Carare (ATCC)*, Primera edición en Colombia, Pensamiento (Bogotá, Colombia: Taurus, 2011); CNRR, *¡Basta Ya!*

³⁰ Enzo Nussio and Corinne A. Pernet, “The Securitisation of Food Security in Colombia, 1970–2010,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 45, no. 04 (November 2013): 641–68.

³¹ Absalón Machado C., “La Cuestión agraria frente al neoliberalismo,” in *La falacia neoliberal: crítica y alternativas* (Bogota, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2013), 269–84; Absalón Machado Cartagena, *Ensayos sobre seguridad alimentaria*, 1. ed (Bogotá: Univ. Nacional de Colombia, Red de Desarrollo Rural y Seguridad Aliment, 2003); Absalón Machado Cartagena, “El problema alimentario en Colombia [1986],” in *Ensayos sobre seguridad alimentaria*, 1. ed (Bogotá: Univ. Nacional de Colombia, Red de Desarrollo Rural y Seguridad Aliment, 2003); Absalón Machado Cartagena, *La reforma rural, una deuda social y política* (Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo, 2009).

³² Gobierno de la República de Colombia and Gobierno de la República de Colom, “Acuerdo final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera” (La Habana, Cuba, November 24, 2016), UN Peacemaker DPPA Online Mediation Support Tool.

³³ Darío Fajardo Montaña, “Consumo de alimentos y producción agrícola en Colombia 1970-1986” (Bogotá, Colombia: FAO, January 1988), 339.4 F141, FAO David Lubin Memorial Library, Rome; Darío Fajardo Montaña, “Agricultura, campesinos y alimentos (1980-2010)” (Tesis de

their analyses, however environmental aspects in their historical revisions and conclusions were still secondary.

Antonio Ortega-Santos wrote: “[E]nvironmental history has evolved from 1980s agrarian history [and] one of its principal aims is to create a framework for the interpretation of the metabolism between agro-ecosystems and rural communities”.³⁴ As expressed by Afro-peasantries in Colombia, their radical relationality with Nature is an important aspect of the ‘peasant being’, which was ratified by this research during the fieldwork.³⁵ In other words, they see themselves as part of Nature and strongly connected to their territories. This is the reason why environmental history, which recognises Nature – and humans as part of it – as an historical subject, provides an appropriate methodology to investigate the history of landscapes and peasantries.³⁶ In Latin America, environmental histories have developed two main features: territories are defined according to naturally created configurations, such as biogeographical regions, watersheds, agroecosystems or pest distribution areas, rather than by politico-administrative divisions; and they use a rich diversity of sources.³⁷

Latin American environmental histories that are seminal to my work relate to neglected areas, agri-food cultures, and agro-ecological discussions. Environmental history allows social metabolism and Nature a protagonist role, as McCook has done by following the story of a coffee pathogen around the world.³⁸ It also facilitates a critical approach to retrogressive agri-food policies with negative impacts, as seen in Ochoa’s work.³⁹ In Colombia, environmental historians have produced original works focused on poorly studied areas – mostly warm lowlands with savannahs or rainforests – and on undervalued

grado para optar al título de Doctor en Estudios Sociales, Bogotá, Colombia, Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2018), (bdigital.uexternado.edu.co); Darío Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural* (Bogotá: ILSA, 2002).

³⁴ Antonio Ortega Santos, “Agroecosystem, Peasants, and Conflicts: Environmental History in Spain at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century,” *Global Environment* 2, no. 4 (January 1, 2009): 157.

³⁵ Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*, Latin America in Translation (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

³⁶ Stefania Gallini, “La naturaleza cultural de la historia ambiental y su rematerialización,” *Historia cultural desde Colombia. Categorías y Debates*, 2012, 377–97.

³⁷ Stefania Gallini, “Problemas de métodos en la historia ambiental de América Latina,” *Anuario IHES (Argentina) (Penúltima versión entregada para publicación)* 19, no. 2004 (2004): 147–71.

³⁸ Stuart George McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever: A Global History of the Coffee Leaf Rust*, Ohio University Press Series in Ecology and History (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2019).

³⁹ Enrique Ochoa, *Feeding Mexico: The Political Uses of Food since 1910* (Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2000).

communities including Afro-descendants, indigenous groups and peasants. As Leal and Palacio have shown, these peoples have transformed the landscape into territories of emancipation that are now threatened by agro-industrial land grabbing.⁴⁰ Finally, recent studies by authors such as Soluri and Cuvi have shone a positive agroecological light on the contribution of indigenous groups and peasantries' agri-food cultures through different ages.⁴¹

Environmental history in Latin America, however, seems not to have sufficiently explored the potential of oral history to trace the memory of Nature. There has however been a long discussion about the potential of indigenous communities' interpretations of 'Nature's testimonies', to tell the recent history of rivers, mangroves or *páramos*.⁴² On the other hand, oral history and memory research in Colombia – mainly focused on the armed conflict – has neglected Nature, even though it is currently recognised by the Colombian laws as another victim of the conflict and a rights-holding subject.⁴³

This thesis is based on environmental history and oral history combined with a radically critical view of developmentalist studies and food studies. In this it brings Machado and his integral view of a rural reform into conversation with Deere and Bacca's gender perspective, and Fals-Borda's peasantism and

⁴⁰ Claudia Leal, *Landscapes of Freedom: Building a Postemancipation Society in the Rainforests of Western Colombia* (University of Arizona Press, 2018); Germán Palacio Castañeda, *Fiebre de tierra caliente: una historia ambiental de Colombia, 1850-1930*, Colección En Clave de Sur (Bogotá: ILSA: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Amazonia, 2006); Germán Palacio Castañeda, *Territorios improbables, historias y ambientes*, 1st ed., Colección Ediciones Especiales (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Magisterio, 2018).

⁴¹ John Soluri, "Home Cooking: Campesinos, Cuisine, and Agrodiversity," in *A Living Past: Environmental Histories of Modern Latin America* (New York: Berghahn, 2018), 163–82; John Soluri, *Culturas bananeras: producción, consumo y transformaciones socioambientales*, Biblioteca Sociedad y tecnociencia (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores, 2013); Nicolás Cuvi, "Indigenous Imprints and Remnants in the Tropical Andes," in *A Living Past: Environmental Histories of Modern Latin America* (New York: Berghahn, 2018).

⁴² Debbie Lee and Kathryn Newfont, *The Land Speaks: New Voices at the Intersection of Oral and Environmental History*, Oxford Oral History Series (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017); Danielle Endres, "Environmental Oral History," *Environmental Communication* 5, no. 4 (December 2011): 485–98; Silvia Rivera C, "The Epistemological and Theoretical Potential of Oral History: From the Instrumental Logic to the Decolonization of History (El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia)," in *Critical Theory of Human Rights in the 21st Century (Teoría Crítica Dos Derechos Humanos No Século XXI)* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Edipucrs, 2008), 529; Javier A. Arce-Nazario, "Landscape Images in Amazonian Narrative: The Role of Oral History in Environmental Research," *Conservation and Society* 5, no. 1 (2007): 115–33; Brian Williams and Mark Riley, "The Challenge of Oral History to Environmental History," *Environment and History* 1 (2018): 1–25.

⁴³ Edwin Samir Asprilla Panesso et al., "El medio ambiente como víctima del conflicto armado en el departamento del Chocó," *Pensamiento Americano* 12, no. 23 (January 14, 2019); Liliana Estupiñán Achury et al., eds., *La naturaleza como sujeto de derechos en el constitucionalismo democrático* (Universidad Libre, 2019).

decolonial participatory reaction. This allows it to contribute to the peasant food historiography of Colombia within a global agri-food policy and paradigms framework. Through this methodological framework, this thesis makes an original contribution to the fields of Latin American environmental history, food history and peasant history. It offers original and innovative contributions to scholarship on multiple fronts: first, in bringing forward oral history and memory it privileges peasant perspectives in the historicization of food systems; second, in analysing the parallel study of peasantries' history in three highly dissimilar geographical sites that were subject to the same national agrarian policies and counter-reforms; and third, in using a peasantist approach with a strong conceptual influence from food studies and the peasantist scholars of CAS, as the following section shows.

Critical Concepts

This thesis' analysis relies on an understanding of interdisciplinary concepts coming from a line of peasantist scholars within the Peasant Studies (now called Critical Agrarian Studies [CAS]), Socio-Ecological theory (SET), food studies, and both decolonial studies and grassroot epistemologies. The main concepts that require definition in this research are related to: first, decoloniality and internal colonialism; second, the historical actors – namely, the peasants (and depeasantisation), the peasant landscape or territory and the peasant-land bond called relationality; third, agrarian reforms and counter-reforms; and finally, the factors of analysis – food sovereignty, and its relationship to food security and peasant rights framed into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP).

Decolonial Research and Internal Colonialism

A decolonial approach was chosen to conduct this work in order to advance a history-from-below. Therefore, primarily, this thesis' methodology brings forward peasants' voices and their 'short memories' of agro-ecological change collected directly during fieldwork, and puts them the at the centre of its analyses.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Rivera C, "The Epistemological and Theoretical Potential of Oral History: From the Instrumental Logic to the Decolonization of History (El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia)."

These interviews have been translated (see Methodology section), however more than that and to the best of my abilities, I offer interpretations and further analyses which are loyal to their original narrators and their defence of their local cultures and narratives.

Drawing from food sovereignty, a peasant concept itself, this thesis privileges the peasants' assessment of events and transformations in the historicization of food security, peasants' rights and peasant landscape. The arguments advanced through this thesis, although expressed in a language drawn from academic theoretical frameworks, are therefore highly founded in grassroots peasant knowledge and felt-and-thought ideas: *sentipensante* ideas.⁴⁵

This means that I also deploy, when appropriate, post-development and post-colonial lexicology and concepts emanating from two different Latin American decolonial currents. The first is the decoloniality school of thought, represented by authors of the 'decolonial turn' such as Mignolo, Quijano and Escobar, which has advanced the concept of decoloniality as a decolonisation of knowledge. In this sense, having a decolonial approach implies delinking knowledge from the Western mentality and praxis to incorporate epistemic recognition of other – equally valid – systems of knowledge, such as those emerging from indigenous, ethnic and peasant communities.⁴⁶ The second school inspiring this work is the radical anticolonial and decolonising practice led by Rivera-Cusicanqui, who proposes recognition of 'internal colonialism' and challenging its manifestations.⁴⁷ This concept of internal colonialism, as defined by González-Casanova, evokes colonial legacies of oppression endured by Latin American peoples, such as peasantries, due to the constant reproduction

⁴⁵ Orlando Fals Borda and Víctor Manuel Moncayo, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2015); Patricia Botero Gómez, "Sentipensar," in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, ed. Ashish Kothari et al. (New Delhi: Tulika Books and Authorsupfront, 2019), 302–4.

⁴⁶ Walter D Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009); Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, On Decoloniality (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Aníbal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America," *International Sociology* 15, no. 2 (June 2000): 215–32; Arturo Escobar, "Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions: A Preliminary Conversation," *Sustainability Science* 10, no. 3 (July 2015): 451–62.

⁴⁷ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores* (Buenos Aires: Retazos : Tinta Limón Ediciones, 2010); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "The Notion of 'Rights' and the Paradoxes of Postcolonial Modernity: Indigenous Peoples and Women in Bolivia," *Qui Parle* 18, no. 2 (2010): 29; Pablo Gonzalez Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 1, no. 4 (1965): 27–37.

of colonial practices exercised by elites through inherited structures of power. These practices include epistemic colonialism and extractivism. There is, therefore, a contradiction, according to Rivera-Cusicanqui, in Northern academic research of the Souths, which I approach in my positionality statement. Rivera-Cusicanqui also demonstrated the relationship between racism, classism, patriarchy, and peasant oppression, exposing remaining colonial legacies in Latin American rural societies, and offering instead an anticolonial perspective of peasant history based on memory and the 'peasant episteme'.⁴⁸ Alongside this, her approach to the *mestizo* indigenous-descendant peasantry as racialised and oppressed communities also illuminates key arguments proposed in this thesis.⁴⁹

Peasantries

I frame this thesis in the most radical peasantism, as inspired by the Chayanovian tradition within Critical Agrarian Studies.⁵⁰ This means that it openly champions peasants' presence, permanence and autonomy in their territories, and criticises policies that have threatened those, in practice or intention. I do not use the word 'peasants' lightly, being aware of misinterpretations of the term to mean 'common place', uncivilised, or being a product of romanticisation or exoticism.⁵¹ As Rivera-Cusicanqui demonstrated, drawing from peasant knowledge and appreciating the epistemological value of oral history are fundamental for a decolonial reading of environmental history in rural areas of the Global South.⁵²

⁴⁸ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos Pero No Vencidos: Luchas Del Campesinado Aymara y Qhechwa de Bolivia, 1900-1980*, 4th Ed (La Paz, Bolivia: WA-GUI, 2010); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, "El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia," 1987.

⁴⁹ The *Ch'ixi* or *cholos* are non-white indigenous-descendant *mestizos*. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Sociología de La Imagen: Miradas Ch'ixi Desde La Historia Andina*, Colección Noción Comunes (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón Ediciones, 2015); Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: On Practices and Discourses of Decolonisation*, trans. Molly Geidel, Critical South (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity, 2020).

⁵⁰ Inspired by Alexander Chayanov's ideas. Alexander V Chayanov and Santiago E Funes, *Chayanov y la teoría de la economía campesina* (México: Pasado y Presente, 1981); Ivan Kremnev and Alexander Chayanov, "The Journey of My Brother Alexei to the Land of Peasant Utopia," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 4, no. 1 (1920 1976): 63–108; Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*.

⁵¹ As occurred in the University's ethics approval process where this project encountered opposition to the use of the word 'peasants'.

⁵² Rivera Cusicanqui, "El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia."

This thesis' choice of language serves specific purposes of presenting a subaltern, emancipatory and southern viewpoint. In some cases, I do not use the direct translation of terms, but the interpretation of ideas, memories, identities and insurgencies. Hence the use of the word 'peasants' or 'peasantries', instead of the less controversial *campesino*, to sound disruptive. At the same time, however, I retain the terms *terrateniente* or *acuatiente* from the sources instead of the 'landlord', as the English term does not convey the same sense of colonial legacy and oppression.

'Peasant' is a dynamic and complex term, one increasingly difficult to define and often confused with 'small farmer', 'subsistence farmer' or 'smallholder'. Although a peasant could be any of these, this word encompasses a lot more. Unfortunately, this term is also heavily charged with classist overtones in English and sometimes avoided or considered an anachronism.⁵³ However since the 1960s various peasant organisations worldwide, and also the continuously growing field of peasant studies, have reclaimed this word to designate dignified human groups which proudly self-identify as such.⁵⁴ In the context of the Cold War, peasantries gained attention as historical subjects in Latin America after the Mexican and Cuban revolutions' agrarian reforms, which are known for being fundamentally peasantist. More recently, the European re-peasantisation movement of the new peasantries has motivated the re-emergence of peasant studies, and, with the advent of CAS scholarship, it is no longer merely a Russian or Global South issue.⁵⁵

This thesis primarily bases its understanding of 'peasant' on concepts collected from fieldwork interviews but began developing its critical framework by drawing on work from CAS scholars such as Edelman, van der Ploeg and Bryceson. Edelman's work for UNDROP brings forward the definition of peasants developed by the transnational peasants' movement *La Vía*

⁵³ Shanin is considered the father of peasant studies. Teodor Shanin, *The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of Peasantry in a Developing Society: Russia 1910-1925* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

⁵⁴ Henry Bernstein et al., "Forum: Fifty Years of Debate on Peasantries, 1966–2016," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45, no. 4 (April 17, 2018): 689–714.

⁵⁵ See Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries*; Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*; Deborah Bryceson, Cristóbal Kay, and Jos Mooij, eds., *Disappearing Peasantries?: Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Rugby, Warwickshire, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 2000); Teodor Shanin, ed., *Peasant and Peasant Societies*, Penguin Modern Sociology Readings (Great Britain: Penguin Ed, 1971); Philip McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions* (Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, 2014); Edelman, "What Is a Peasant? What Are Peasantries? A Briefing Paper on Issues of Definition."

Campesina: 'peoples of the land'.⁵⁶ This is the basic definition of peasant. Van der Ploeg also offers a global definition of 'peasants' as those who are involved in a peasant type of agriculture. This is an agriculture where the means of production do not represent capital but patrimony, and peasants enjoy a certain level of autonomy in their social relations of production.⁵⁷ In other words, they have some control and decision capacity over their work-load, their crops and practices. To complement those two descriptions, this thesis also draws elements from Bryceson's critical frameworks to help analyse both peasant experience and depeasantisation processes. This formula, which she called FFCC and I refer to as 'Family-Farm-Community-Class criteria', can be summarised as follows: peasants live, either as owners, tenants, or administrators, in a small farm (F) with simultaneous subsistence and cash crops; use family (F) labour, meaning that they work the land directly; they are a differentiated class (C) with farm autonomy but external subordination to markets; and they live in peasant communities (C).⁵⁸

For the specific case of Colombia, these frameworks are applied alongside the definition constructed by the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History (ICANH) in collaboration with Colombian peasant representatives:

The peasant is an intercultural and historical subject, with memories, knowledge and practices that constitute forms of peasant culture. This peasant culture is based on family and neighbourhood for the production of food, common goods and raw materials, with a multi-active community life linked to the land and integrated with nature and the territory. The peasant is a subject located in rural areas and municipal capitals associated with them. They can have various forms of land ownership and organisation. They produce both for self-consumption and generation of surpluses with which they participate in the market at the local, regional and national level.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Edelman, "What Is a Peasant? What Are Peasantries? A Briefing Paper on Issues of Definition."

⁵⁷ Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries*.

⁵⁸ Bryceson, Kay, and Mooij, *Disappearing Peasantries?*

⁵⁹ This definition is the result of the technical table formed by ICANH, the government and the peasants of Cauca: César Augusto Pachón Achury et al., "Proyecto de Ley Número 207 de 2020 Cámara: Por medio del cual se crea la categoría especial de campesino o campesina, se expiden normas para su protección, con enfoque diferencial y se dictan otras disposiciones," *Gaceta Del Congreso, Senado y Cámara*, August 12, 2020, 21.

This definition emphasises peasants as historical and intercultural subjects with peasant memories, knowledges and practices, and a special connection with the land, the territory and Nature.⁶⁰ Fulfilling the peasant organisations' demands to be recognised as 'peasants' and to be included in official statistics and programmes, the 2019 polls carried out by the Colombian Department of Statistics DANE used the Colombian peasantry and ICANH's definition to introduce the 'peasant' category in one of its surveys. This obtained a surprising result: 43.6 per cent of the adult population interviewed identified themselves as *campesinas* or *campesinos* (peasants) nation-wide.⁶¹

Finally, and recognising that "actors have the capacity of conceiving themselves", as part of my interviews I inquired about my participants' self-definitions.⁶² Among participant peasants, the common expressions conceptualising the word 'peasant' were: 'people from the countryside, raised and born', 'who live in and work the land', 'who live from the land's products', 'who grow their own food and share/sell to others', and/or 'people connected with the land and the territory'. They also denote a preference for the word territory as a living entity, physically and also sometimes spiritually. I found that these ideas are highly aligned with definitions provided by CAS and ICANH. A couple of notions, however, are a bit more radical. People involved in this thesis also seem to prioritise natal and ancestral peasant credentials, indicating their views that most people cannot 'become' a peasant, but must 'belong' and be born and raised a peasant. This seems to be a particularly strong feeling for those who inherited the lands of their parents and grandparents.

Maintaining the peasant lifestyles for generations, however, requires sustainable 'peasant economies', where there is always a family farm production-consumption unit, although cash crops can also be grown either from subsistence crop surplus or a separated product.⁶³ Additionally, while

⁶⁰ Marta Saade Granados, ed., *Conceptualización del campesinado en Colombia. documento técnico para su definición, caracterización y medición* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia ICANH, 2020); Pachón Achury et al., "Proyecto de Ley Número 207 de 2020."

⁶¹ DANE, "Caracterización de la población campesina - Información 2019 - Presentación" (Bogotá, Colombia: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística DANE, March 2020), <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/gobierno/cultura-politica#caracterizacion-de-la-poblacion-campesina>.

⁶² Hoffmann, "Divergencias Construidas, Convergencias Por Construir. Identidad, Territorio y Gobierno En La Ruralidad Colombiana," January 2016, 19.

⁶³ Teodor Shanin, "The Nature and Logic of the Peasant Economy 1: A Generalisation 1," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 1, no. 1 (October 1973): 63–80.

extractive economies are characterised by ‘production without reproduction’, reproduction of life, and their way of life, is key for peasant economies.⁶⁴

Finally, to clarify the expression ‘peasantries’, or ‘peasantry’, I simply adopted van der Ploeg’s definition, which is “conglomerations of peasants sharing common experiences and identities”.⁶⁵ In other words, these are usually peasant communities, or groups of peasants who share the same territory. As suggested by ICANH, there are multiple different kinds of peasant community in Colombia. Therefore, I use the plural ‘peasantries’ when I speak of two or more different peasant communities at the same time.

Depeasantisation

The concepts of ‘de-agrarianisation’ and depeasantisation are related, but should not be confused. According to Bryceson, de-agrarianisation is “a process of: (i) economic activity reorientation (livelihood), (ii) occupational adjustment (work activity), and (iii) spatial realignment of human settlement (residence) away from agrarian patterns”. By contrast, peasantisation and depeasantisation are dynamics of “fluctuating populations of rural producers involved specifically in the peasant labour process denoted by the FFCC [farm, family, community, class] criteria”.⁶⁶ The loss of subsistence crops and peasants no longer working in their farms, therefore, are symptoms of depeasantisation processes. In early works, Van der Ploeg also defined depeasantisation as the disappearance of peasants; however more recently he recognised it as a process of peasants or agriculture “becoming less peasant-like”.⁶⁷ This does not mean that peasants are monolithic and reject cultural changes – quite the contrary, Van der Ploeg understands that peasantries survive within the dynamics created by flows of depeasantisation and *repeasantisation*. It is when one of those changes

⁶⁴ Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*; Jingzhong Ye et al., “The Incursions of Extractivism: Moving from Dispersed Places to Global Capitalism,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 47, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 155–83.

⁶⁵ Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*, 134.

⁶⁶ Deborah Fahy Bryceson, “Deagrarianization and Rural Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Sectoral Perspective,” *World Development* 24, no. 1 (January 1996): 3; Deborah Bryceson, “Peasant Theories and Smallholder Policies: Past and Present,” in *Disappearing Peasantries?: Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, ed. Deborah Bryceson, Cristóbal Kay, and Jos Mooij (Rugby, Warwickshire, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 2000), 3.

⁶⁷ Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*; Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization* (Abingdon: Earthscan, 2009), 25.

eliminates characteristics which make them peasants that depeasantisation occurs – for example, when they no longer live in the farm.

Although peasantries in the three studied sub-regions have not entirely disappeared, they have all suffered different levels of becoming less-peasant like as a result of agrarian counter-reforms. Even more, as this investigation demonstrates, depeasantisation as a process involves enhancing internal colonial legacies that threaten peasant cultures, not only agriculture, and render communities, families and individuals less ‘peasant-like’.

Territorio: Lands and Peasant Landscape

Colombian institutional definitions of peasantry highlight their attachment to land: “The peasant... [has] a multi-active community life linked to the land and integrated with nature and the territory”.⁶⁸ Understanding ideas of land and landscape is therefore key for the analysis of peasantry and agrarian (counter-) reforms.

The term landscape is here used to denote geomorphological subjects, covering landforms and their assemblages, superficial changing processes, and harmonic natural forces co-evolving with humans. For environmental historians they are key: “landscapes tell stories which not uncommonly can be traced back in time to tens of million years and include unique events.”⁶⁹ This thesis focuses on peasant landscapes, which are landscapes associated with agroecosystems under peasantries’ management. These are socio-ecosystems, to use Socio-Ecological Theory (SET) terminology, meaning that they are indivisible units of ‘culture-Nature’ or ‘socio-Nature’ that include the energetical/material exchanges occurring within them.⁷⁰ Food is an obvious element – perhaps the most important – within that metabolic exchange.

⁶⁸ Taken from a Law Project for the protection of peasantries: César Augusto Pachón Achury et al., “Proyecto de Ley Número 207 de 2020 Cámara: Por medio del cual se crea la categoría especial de campesino o campesina, se expiden normas para su protección, con enfoque diferencial y se dictan otras disposiciones,” *Gaceta del Congreso, Senado y Cámara*, August 12, 2020, 21.

⁶⁹ Michel Hermelin and Piotr Migoń, eds., “Preface,” in *Landscapes and Landforms of Colombia*, World Geomorphological Landscapes (Cham: Springer, 2016), xi.

⁷⁰ Fridolin Krausmann and Ernst Langthaler, “Food Regimes and Their Trade Links: A Socio-Ecological Perspective,” *Ecological Economics* 160 (June 2019): 87–95; Simron Jit Singh, ed., *Long Term Socio-Ecological Research: Studies in Society-Nature Interactions across Spatial and Temporal Scales*, Human-Environment Interactions 2 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2013); Sergio Coronado Delgado and Kristina Dietz, “Controlling Territories, Restructuring Socio-Ecological Relations: The Globalization of Agrofuels and Their Local Effects, the Case of Montes de María

As environmental history, this thesis uses the peasant landscape as an analytical category to review transformations in time, however to convey the meaning peasants truly confer to the environment they live in, the word territory and the territoriality as action are needed.

Territorio, here directly translated as ‘territory’, on the other hand, is a slightly more complex concept in the peasant language, holding different connotations in geography and social sciences usage compared to decolonial thinking. This thesis draws on decolonial approaches to *territorio* which highlight ethnic, indigenous, and/or peasant perspectives.⁷¹ Territory here is understood as a space appropriated by a peasant society through common practices, values and identities, with both practical and spiritual meaning.⁷² Traditionally in Colombia it is understood as belonging to particular ethnic and racial groups, however in real rural experiences the sense of territoriality exceeds those assigned parameters.⁷³ These framings are dominant in Colombia because ethnic or indigenous communities hold specific legal rights to land under the Constitution and peasants have adopted such framings of territory to lay similar claim to land on the grounds that they also maintain communal practices and/or manage common natural resources, as in Los Montes de María or Santurbán.⁷⁴

Finally, the use of the expression ‘Global South’ deserves rationalisation. Developing a peasantist analysis, and drawing on scholars of the Latin American decolonial turn such as Mignolo and Escobar, I avoid the language associated with re-evaluated ideas of ‘underdevelopment’ such as ‘emerging

in Colombia (Controlando Territorios, Reestructurando Relaciones Socio-Ecológicas: La Globalización de Agrocombustibles y Sus Efectos Locales, El Caso de Montes de María En Colombia),” *Iberoamericana* 13, no. 49 (March 2013): 93–115.

⁷¹ Angel Libardo Herreño Hernández, “Evolución política y legal del concepto de territorio ancestral indígena en Colombia,” *El Otro Derecho* 31–32 (2004): 247–72; Eugenia Pizarro et al., “Entendiendo la justicia ocupacional desde el concepto de territorio, una propuesta para la ciencia de la ocupación,” *Journal of Occupational Science* 25, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): xvi–xxvi; Danilo Rodríguez Valbuena, “Territorio y territorialidad. Nueva categoría de análisis y desarrollo didáctico de la geografía,” *Uni-pluriversidad* 10, no. 3 (2010): 90–100.

⁷² Alicia M. Barabas, “La construcción de etnoterritorios en las culturas indígenas de Oaxaca,” *Desacatos*, no. 14 (2004): 145–68; Tyanif Rico Rodríguez and Pedro Sergio Urquijo Torres, “Sobre La Figura Del Campesino y La Gestión Del Territorio: Una Aproximación Desde Nariño (Colombia),” *Historia Agraria Revista de Agricultura e Historia Rural*, no. 83 (April 1, 2021): 225–58; Luis Sánchez-Ayala and Cindia Arango-López, “Contra Viento y Marea Aquí Estoy: Territorio e Identidad En San Cristóbal, Montes de María,” *Latin American Research Review* 50, no. 3 (2015): 203–24.

⁷³ Odile Hoffmann, “Divergencias Construidas, Convergencias Por Construir. Identidad, Territorio y Gobierno En La Ruralidad Colombiana,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 52, no. 1 (January 2016): 17–39.

⁷⁴ Fieldwork observation.

countries' or 'third world'.⁷⁵ This is why, although the term is somewhat divisive, and dichotomic, this thesis adopts the term Global South, or even Souths. Souths, in this context, not only represent geographical positions but also mean the oppressed and marginalised communities in any given space, such as Freire's 'oppressed' and Guha's 'subalterns': those groups traditionally marginalised within history, like peasantries.⁷⁶ As Guha did, in my work I intend to highlight the viewpoint of these historically marginalised populations.⁷⁷

Radical Relationality

Following Escobar and Afro-colombian communities' ideas, this thesis uses the concept of 'radical relationality' to identify the unbreakable bond interconnecting key environmental historical subjects in this research: Nature and culture, which constitute the 'peasant landscape' as a unit. Nature, here, as described by Gudynas with capital 'N', is the environment where the landscape, flora and fauna prevails either natively or with low or intermediate levels of human intervention. The capital 'N' acknowledges Nature as a living entity with rights.⁷⁸ From a scientific perspective, peasant settlements are metabolically bound socio-ecosystems, while viewed decolonially they are indivisible and *sentipensante* units (units understood by thinking and feeling).⁷⁹ In other words, whilst, structurally, in this literature review I am presenting landscape/territory and peasantries as separate subjects, in reality, and from a peasant perspective, they are not. All beings in Nature, including peasants, "are so deeply interrelated that they have no intrinsic, separate existence by themselves".⁸⁰ The peasantries, therefore, merged with their peasant territory

⁷⁵ Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*; Walter D Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*. (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009); Escobar, "Degrowth, Postdevelopment, and Transitions"; Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*, Latin America in Translation (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020); Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*, New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

⁷⁶ Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, 9th impression (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982); Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: Penguin Books, 2017).

⁷⁷ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

⁷⁸ Eduardo Gudynas, *Derechos de la naturaleza y políticas ambientales* (Bogotá: Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis, 2014).

⁷⁹ Anibal Alejandro Rojas Hernández and Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza Filho, "Ensanchando caminos: hacia un socioambientalismo sentipensante en Colombia," *Revista Da Faculdade de Direito UFPR* 62, no. 2 (2017): 268.

⁸⁰ Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 2020, xiii.

must be seen as “biophysical units... in which humans and nature are integrated rather than artificially and arbitrarily separated”.⁸¹

This level of belonging and familiarity permits spontaneous practices of commoning, which organically occur with shared resources, and of unwritten rules of environmental preservation of the *casa común* (common home).⁸² Although not a frequently used word in peasants’ vocabulary, commoning is actually a frequent practice, including collective acts of care and/or governance and the communal management of resources, particularly water and seeds. These peasants also communally share intangible assets such as values, responsibilities, conservationist practices, collective memories, and agri-food and cultural traditions.⁸³ In other words, the relationality bond ties them to the territories and, by means of its practicalities, also to the community. When these bonds are broken by depeasantisation, *desterritorialización* (deterritorialisation) and dispossession, peasants therefore experience this as a form of violence causing pain and emotional damage.

Agrarian Reform and Counter-reform

Traditionally, peasants understood an ‘agrarian reform’ in terms of facilitating “*tierra pa’l que la trabaja*” (land for those who work it).⁸⁴ Obtaining a property title for a plot with a minimum number of hectares was a primary peasant goal, followed by building a house and sowing subsistence crops to maintain a family. That minimum amount of land varied depending on socio-political,

⁸¹ Alejandra Guzmán Luna et al., “Territorial Resilience the Third Dimension of Agroecological Scaling: Approximations from Three Peasant Experiences in the South of Mexico,” *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 43, no. 7–8 (September 14, 2019): 765.

⁸² From an interview with Fredy Maldonado, conducted in 2021 by the local magazine ‘Construyendo Región’. Maldonado was one of this project’s fixers, a peasant leader who invited this investigation to the *páramo*. This expression is likely inspired by the Pope Francis’ *Laudato si’* Encyclical Letter: “‘Defendemos Santurbán porque es nuestra casa común: aquí nacimos y aquí vivimos’ diálogo con el dirigente social y ambiental Freddy Alonso Maldonado,” *Construyendo Región*, March 2021, sec. Personaje; The Holy Father Francis, “Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home,” Encyclical Letter, May 24, 2015.

⁸³ Johannes Euler, “Conceptualizing the Commons: Moving Beyond the Goods-Based Definition by Introducing the Social Practices of Commoning as Vital Determinant,” *Ecological Economics* 143 (January 2018): 10–16; A. Dwinell and M. Olivera, “The Water Is Ours Damn It! Water Commoning in Bolivia,” *Community Development Journal* 49, no. suppl 1 (January 1, 2014): i44–52; Euler, “Conceptualizing the Commons”; Malene K. Brandshaug, “Water as More than Commons or Commodity: Understanding Water Management Practices in Yanque, Peru,” *Water Alternatives* 12, no. 2 (2019): 538–53.

⁸⁴ Peasant leader testimony about the 1970s ‘struggles for the land’: Jesús María Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*, 1st ed. (Bogota, Colombia: .Puntoaparte Editores, 2010), 5.

environmental and geographical conditions, among others, and it was defined by law in 1961 in Colombia and called *Unidad Agrícola Familiar* (UAF) (Familial Agrarian Unit).⁸⁵ However, as Barraclough and more recently Fajardo and Machado had argued, an integral agrarian reform is not merely a land reform.⁸⁶ It should not only offer peasants terrain and the soil, but also autonomy to manage their resources, including water and seeds, and should facilitate marketisation and social justice conditions as stated in the UNDROP.⁸⁷ Drawing from that understanding, policies and actions with the opposite effect – creating barriers to accessing land, water, seeds, market – are recognised by this dissertation as counter-reforms.⁸⁸ Effective agrarian reforms are not merely laws, but policies and systemic solutions with redistributive impacts and radical changes to power relations.⁸⁹

Analogously, the term counter-reformist policy or action is typified from the perspective of its practical consequences on real contexts. Much as agrarian reform is associated in its basic form with land redistribution, the most noticeable outcome of counter-reformist action is dispossession.

⁸⁵ Colombia, “Law 160: Agrarian Reform and Rural Development System,” Pub. L. No. 160, 43 (1994).

⁸⁶ Solon L. Barraclough, review of *Review of The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America*, by Alain de Janvry, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 32, no. 3 (1984): 639–49; Solon Barraclough, “The Legacy of Latin American Land Reform,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 28, no. 3 (November 1994): 16–21; Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*; CNMH, *The Agrarian Reform and Land Policy*; Machado Cartagena, *Ensayos sobre seguridad alimentaria*.

⁸⁷ UN Human Rights Council, “A/C.3/73/L.30: Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas,” A/C.3/73/L.30 UN Resolution § General Assembly (2018), <https://undocs.org/en/A/C.3/73/L.30>.

⁸⁸ Álvaro Albán, “Reforma y contrarreforma agraria en Colombia,” *Revista de Economía Institucional* 13, no. 24 (June 2011): 327–56; Armando José Mercado Vega, “Contrarreforma agraria y conflicto armado: Abandono y despojo de tierras en los Montes de María, 1996 - 2016,” *Economía & Región* 11, no. 2 (February 16, 2018): 197–248.

⁸⁹ Barraclough, “The Legacy of Latin American Land Reform,” November 1994.

Food Sovereignty and Food Security



Image 1. Tweet by the 'Unión de campesinos de Santurbán'. Photos of a peasant couple making artisan bread on a wood oven. Photos by Sandy Flórez and Unión de campesinos de Santurbán, taken in Santodomingo de Silos, 2021.⁹⁰

Mr. Andrés Delgado and Mrs. Carmen Elena Villamizar make artisan bread and cookies in their wood oven, in Santo Domingo de Silos, Northern Santander, with wheat and maize from our land. Peasant tradition in the Santurbán *páramo*.⁹¹

Unión de campesinos de Santurbán

Food security and food sovereignty are two concepts in pursuit of the same goal: to grant access to safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food. However, their approach as to how to achieve this differs. While food security is a framework developed to measure indicators such as accessibility and availability of food in numbers, food sovereignty is a political concept coined by

⁹⁰ Sandy Flórez, *Photo of Mr. Andrés Delgado and Mrs. Carmen Elena Villamizar*, March 22, 2021, Photograph, 435x180pixels 96dpi, March 22, 2021, Unión Campesina del Páramo de Santurbán.

⁹¹ Unión de campesinos de Santurbán, "Don Andrés Delgado y Doña Carmen Elena Villamizar en su horno de leña hacen el pan y las galletas artesanales," Tweet, @Union_Santurban, March 22, 2021, twitter.com/Union_Santurban/status/1374100042416537602.

the transnational peasant movement and is based on the rights of consumers, producers and Nature.⁹² Thus, a society with a basic food offer and a stable, liveable income to pay for it, for instance, is recognised as food secure, and conversely, food insecurity is usually associated with poverty.⁹³ On the other hand, food sovereignty is an idea closer to what *Union de campesinos de Santurbán* expresses in the quote above and with the photo of image 1: the right to grow your own native food and prepare it in your traditional manner, with care for Nature, according to your cultural inheritance.

The four dimensions system of food security measurement is shown in figure 1; for contrast, figure 2 displays a diagram of the main original components of food sovereignty.⁹⁴ As can be seen in figure 1, stability across time is a transversal condition in the food security model, since an interruption in continuity of any component within any of these dimensions would indicate food insecurity.⁹⁵ The original food security framework created in the 1970s was attached to the notion of quantity and to the Green Revolution technologies to increase food production. The notion of food stability was only recently added, which includes import dependency as an indicator of insecurity. Neoliberal decision-makers tend to overlook the stability dimension of food security and disregard national food self-sufficiency as key elements of food security. However, it is this dimension which connects and creates synergies between the concepts of food security and food sovereignty.

⁹² The rights of Nature radical approach remains, however, being mostly Latin American. On food sovereignty dimensions' structure see: FAO, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015" (Rome, Italy: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2015), <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4646e.pdf>; Hannah Wittman, ed., *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature & Community* (Halifax: Fernwood Publ. [u.a.], 2010)

On rights approaches to food sovereignty see: A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi, "Accelerating towards Food Sovereignty," *Third World Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (March 4, 2015): 563–83; Naomi Millner, "'The Right to Food Is Nature Too': Food Justice and Everyday Environmental Expertise in the Salvadoran Permaculture Movement," *Local Environment* 22, no. 6 (June 3, 2017): 764–83.

⁹³ However, FAO et al have recently recognised that due to malnutrition, food insecurity in the Global North is increasing. See: FAO et al., *The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns*, 2019.

⁹⁴ FAO, "Food Security Indicators," Metadata (FAO, September 15, 2017), <http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/ess-fadata/en/#.We-fYGL7bIW>.

⁹⁵ A. D. Jones et al., "What Are We Assessing When We Measure Food Security? A Compendium and Review of Current Metrics," *Advances in Nutrition: An International Review Journal* 4, no. 5 (September 1, 2013): 481–505.

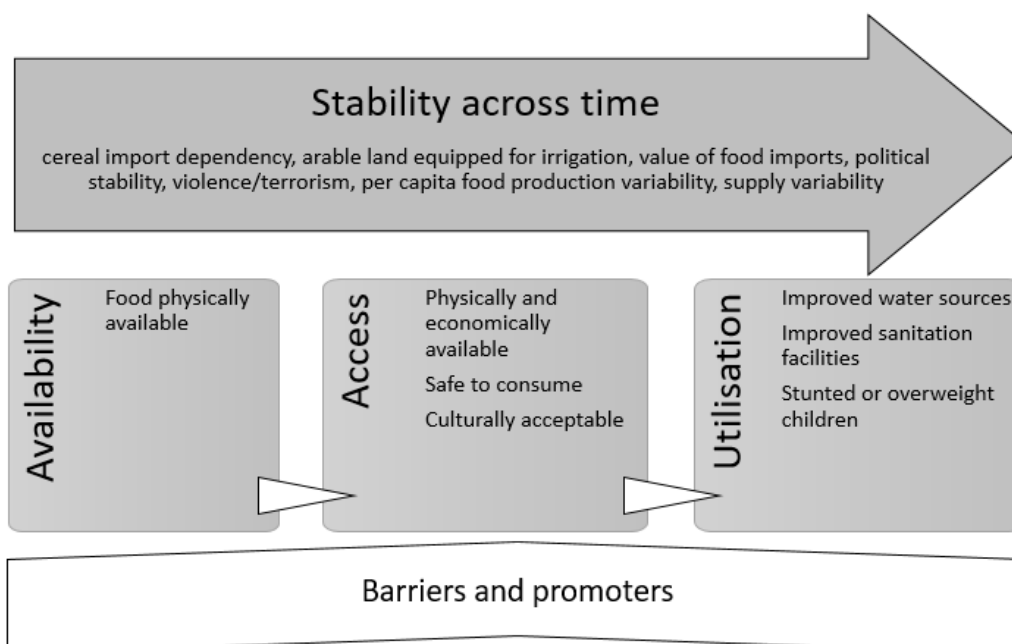


Figure 1. Food security dimensions
 Following adapted the Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO and Jones et al Jones et al.⁹⁶

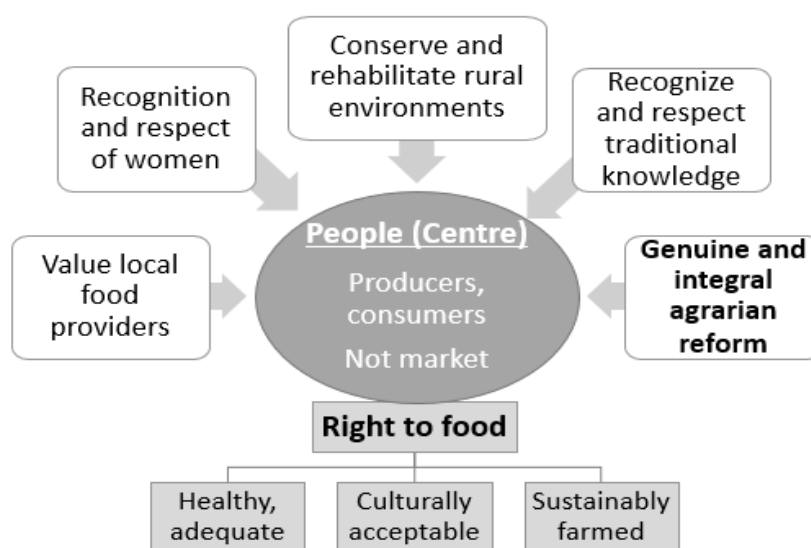


Figure 2. Food sovereignty
 Authors' elaboration based on Nyéléni declaration.⁹⁷

Food sovereignty (Figure 2) was originally conceived by *La Vía Campesina* and fully formulated at the 2007 Nyéléni forum as follows: “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through

⁹⁶ FAO, “Food Security Indicators”; Jones et al., “What Are We Assessing When We Measure Food Security?”

⁹⁷ Nyéléni collective, “Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007” (<https://nyeleni.org>, February 27, 2007), <https://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>.

ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”.⁹⁸ It encompasses the following main principles: 1) food for people, not commodity; 2) valuing of food providers; 3) protection from dumping, unhealthy food, transgenic and inequitable Free Trade Agreements (FTA); 4) building of knowledge and skills; 5) working with nature; and 6) special recognition of women and indigenous farmers.⁹⁹ The food sovereignty ideal has been widely discussed within academia and the peasant movement, and has evolved to be centred in the framework of rights used throughout this thesis: namely, peasants’ rights, women’s rights, and also Nature’s rights.

Food sovereignty is a right of peasants recognised by the 2018 UNDROP.¹⁰⁰ In order to guarantee this right, conditions such as access to land, water, and free seeds must be met. Food security elements such as infrastructure, transport media, logistics and even additional aspects such as research, extension services and rural development must be assured.¹⁰¹ In the desirable peasant landscape, as formulated by *La Vía Campesina*, food supply relies mainly on self-sufficiency, preserving food traditions, and the sustainable use of natural resources. Therefore, I argue that food sovereignty grants peasant food security. Furthermore, food sovereignty at national or regional level grants national and regional food security, respectively. This thesis argues that policies that favour corporate food production to the detriment of the peasantries have significant negative impacts on land and Nature. However, land and food production being owned by the peasants also benefits society in general, as demonstrated by *Montemariano* peasants who, during the pandemic

⁹⁸ *La Vía Campesina* is a transnational peasant movement that aggregates 182 member organisations from 81 countries around the world, that aims to defend the peasant agriculture and nature using ‘food sovereignty’ as framework for social justice and sustainable farming. See: Jefferson Boyer, “Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and Local Challenges for Transnational Agrarian Movements: The Honduras Case,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37, no. 2 (April 2010): 319–51; María Elena Martínez-Torres and Peter M. Rosset, “La Vía Campesina: The Birth and Evolution of a Transnational Social Movement,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2010): 149–75; La Vía Campesina, “La Vía Campesina. 2017 Annual Report” (La Vía Campesina, May 2017); Nyéléni collective, “Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007.”

⁹⁹ Akram-Lodhi, “Accelerating towards Food Sovereignty.”

¹⁰⁰ UN Human Rights Council, A/C.3/73/L.30: Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, sec. Article 15.

¹⁰¹ Sofia Naranjo, “Enabling Food Sovereignty and a Prosperous Future for Peasants by Understanding the Factors That Marginalise Peasants and Lead to Poverty and Hunger,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 29, no. 2 (June 2012): 231–46.

crisis, shared their food with poor urban dwellers in Cartagena.¹⁰² Local agro-diverse production provides stability.

Although McMichael and other authors consider food sovereignty as an alternative theory to food security, I argue that under the current definition of food security, it is more of a complementary solution.¹⁰³ There are common elements within both concepts, such as culturally acceptable food and per capita production; but above all, current food security theory recognises dependence on imports as a cause of food insecurity, which supports entirely the validity of the food sovereignty case. Furthermore, the sustainability of global food systems, and consequently of future generations' food security and food rights, is also supported by conservation and agro-biodiversity, the main principles of food sovereignty.¹⁰⁴

As Naranjo and McMichael have stated, some rural policies aimed at improving food security – not only in Latin America but globally – have in practice had the opposite effect for peasants and small-farmers, leading to their marginalisation, poverty and hunger.¹⁰⁵ The current global food pricing and

¹⁰² Redacción Cartagena, “Campesinos de Bolívar donan alimentos para damnificados en Cartagena | EL UNIVERSAL - Cartagena,” *El Universal*, November 17, 2020, sec. Cartagena, www.eluniversal.com.co/cartagena/campesinos-de-Bolívar-donan-alimentos-para-damnificados-en-cartagena-FX3808878; Prensa armada de Colombia, “15 toneladas de productos agrícolas de los Montes de María llegaron a hogares cartageneros,” *Comando General de las Fuerzas Militares*, May 4, 2020, sec. Blog, www.cgfm.mil.co.

¹⁰³ Rita Calvário, “Food Sovereignty and New Peasantries: On Re-Peasantization and Counter-Hegemonic Contestations in the Basque Territory,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 2 (March 4, 2017): 402–20; Akram-Lodhi, “Accelerating towards Food Sovereignty”; Naranjo, “Enabling Food Sovereignty and a Prosperous Future for Peasants by Understanding the Factors That Marginalise Peasants and Lead to Poverty and Hunger”; Philip McMichael, “Historicizing Food Sovereignty,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 933–57.

¹⁰⁴ Luz Adriana Moreno, Cristina Rueda, and Germán I. Andrade, eds., *Biodiversity 2017. Status and Trends of Continental Biodiversity in Colombia* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2017); Sven-Erik Jacobsen et al., “Feeding the World: Genetically Modified Crops versus Agricultural Biodiversity,” *Agronomy for Sustainable Development* 33, no. 4 (October 2013): 651–62; Angus Wright, Ivette Perfecto, and John Vandermeer, *Nature's Matrix: “Linking Agriculture, Conservation and Food Sovereignty”* (Hoboken: Earthscan, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ David Rodríguez Goyes and Nigel South, “Land-Grabs, Biopiracy and the Inversion of Justice in Colombia,” *British Journal of Criminology* 56, no. 3 (May 2016): 558–77; Laura Gutiérrez Escobar and Elizabeth Fitting, “The ‘Red de Semillas Libres’: Contesting Biohegemony in Colombia: Contesting Biohegemony in Colombia,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16, no. 4 (October 2016): 711–19; Viviana Martínez and O.L. Castillo, “The Political Ecology of Hydropower: Social Justice and Conflict in Colombian Hydroelectricity Development,” *Energy Research & Social Science* 22 (December 2016): 69–78; Jacobsen et al., “Feeding the World”; Naranjo, “Enabling Food Sovereignty and a Prosperous Future for Peasants by Understanding the Factors That Marginalise Peasants and Lead to Poverty and Hunger”; McMichael, “Historicizing Food Sovereignty,” November 2, 2014; McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, 2014.

production regime have become highly unsustainable, both environmentally and socially.¹⁰⁶ This strongly suggests that food security in practice needs food sovereignty, and food sovereignty requires an integral agrarian reform.

To historicise food sovereignty, McMichael and Friedmann proposed the 'food regimes' framework of analysis which is widely used in CAS. It divides the history of food provision under global capitalism into three stages: the British-centred food regime (1870-1930), the American food aid regime (1950-1970) and the corporate food regime (1980-2000s).¹⁰⁷ This thesis discusses localised aspects of the American aid food regime advanced in the three studied sub-regions across Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and Chapter 5 deals with the corporate food regime. Although the dynamics studied are local, the connection with these food regimes, with international influences, and with global trade is highly noticeable.

Methodology

Following key principles of environmental history, this thesis has three main characteristics. First, it is focused on three peasant territories in different sub-regions, and peasantries within each sub-region have been characterised by common bio-geographical features and peasant cultures. Second, it relies on extensive and diverse sources, many gathered during the exploratory and main fieldwork trips and visits to national and international archives. Third and last, it incorporates concepts from other disciplines to its analytical framework.

This section will present the data sources, discuss the fieldwork design, show the analytical framework and establish my positionality as researcher.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ See: Michalis Hadjikakou and Thomas Wiedmann, 'Shortcomings of a Growth-Driven Food System', in *Handbook on Growth and Sustainability*, ed. by Peter Victor and Brett Dolter (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017), pp. 256–276; McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*.

¹⁰⁷ McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, 2014; McMichael, "Historicizing Food Sovereignty," November 2, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ The taxonomy of sources is guided by Gallini's six footprints: Stefania Gallini, Sofía De la Rosa, and Rigoberto Abello, *Historia ambiental. Hojas de ruta. Guías para el estudio socioecológico de la alta montaña en Colombia* (Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander Von Humboldt, 2015).

Sources

This thesis is based on a combination of different types, or 'footprints', of evidence:

- 1) Documentary footprints: International archives such as the FAO Archives in Rome and The National Archives in London, the Colombian National and parochial collections, and various personal collections and material donated by peasant collaborators. I also used digital archives extensively. I performed, additionally, a comprehensive review of the national and international legal body that frames reforms and counter-reforms herein studied.

Type	Name of the resource
International	FAO Archive
	FAO Library Archives
	UK Nat Archive (National archives UK)
Colombian	Antioquia Historical Archive
	Banco de la República Manizales Archives
	Banco de la República Medellín
	Banco de la República Sincelejo Archives
	Jardín Botánico (Botanical Garden) de Cartagena Library
	Caldas Historical Archive
	Archivo General de Colombia
	Cúcuta Public Library
	IGAC Library
	Universidad Industrial de Santander Library Archive
	Luis Angel Arango Library Archives
	National Library of Colombia
	Universidad Nacional de Caldas Library
	Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá Historical Archive
	Neira Library
	Universidad de Pamplona Library Archive
	Santo Domingo de Silos Casa de la Cultura Archives
Tona Public Library	
Universidad de Antioquia Historical Archive	
Villa María Casa de la Cultura Archives	

Table 2. Physical archives involved in this research.

- 2) Quantitative footprints: I used statistical macro- and micro-data mainly from the following institutional sources:

- i. Colombian: The *Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística* (National Administrative Department of Statistics, DANE), FEDECAFÉ, Fenalce, the *Registro Único de Víctimas* (Official Victims Register, RUV) and Open Data Colombia.
 - ii. International: The World Bank, UN, FAO and Oxfam.
- 3) Oral footprints: Environmental history recognises oral memory as a key source, since traditional written history sources may be insufficient. This thesis represents in total 73 unstructured interviews, 62 of them individual and 11 collective, involving 99 participants and more than 95 hours of audio recording. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, in Los Montes de María, the agrarian areas of Santurbán and the coffee growing area of the Coffee Axis in Colombia, between March and July 2019. These were transcribed with the support of a research assistant and key quotes have been translated to be incorporated to this thesis' analytical framework.
- 4) Fieldwork evidence: During the second fieldtrip I also evidenced through observation and examination any proof to confirm, contradict or complement information from other types of sources. My fieldwork assessments were handwritten by me in a travel journal daily.
- 5) Visual footprints: visual aids can demonstrate interactions and meanings of food in peasants' lifestyles, as well as evidence transformations within the landscape over the years of study. This evidence will include my own photographic material. I also had the collaboration of some local photographers who allowed me access to their collections.
- 6) Silence: The absence of information is also eloquent information.

Every written, graphic, audio and/or video material was digitalised, catalogued and managed using good archival practices and analysed aided by analytical framework tools of my own development.

Environmental Living Memories

Coming from an interdisciplinary background in science and social sciences, I have found new value in historical methodologies for the assessment of transformations over time. The approach and interrogation of primary sources and original narratives framed through the knowledge previously available has

revealed invaluable accounts and ideas I had not considered before, and other angles to tackle food sovereignty and food security as well as environmental research.

This thesis does not re-write history but does re-visit narratives, connects dots and uses a rich testimonial base to incorporate critical contemporary debates, concepts and peasant knowledge to the examination of historical records. I have adopted the expression 'environmental living memories' which combines two peasant expressions: '*memoria viva*' (living memory) and '*memoria ambiental*' (environmental memory) to describe my oral sources. This expression both recognises peasant epistemologies and ontologies and acknowledges their ability to interpret the testimonial evidence of landscape and Nature memories, being their cohabitants and primary caregivers.

The use of these environmental living memories is not exempt from oral history's implications in terms of criticism regarding its rigour and the 'unreliability' of memories.¹⁰⁹ I consider that risk, however, to be no different to any other type of primary source.¹¹⁰ I have interrogated, triangulated and contrasted the testimonies I recorded with other types of evidence, and found indeed interesting situations of subjective narratives coloured by current struggles, and also of embodiment of collective memories to 'enrich' personal experiences and induce a message. I acknowledge these situations in the thesis but confirm that it is that message and its motifs which are crucial, not the accuracy of the micro/personal story. Therefore, I stand with environmental living memories as a major input to base my own narrative on for this peasantist dissertation.

It is important to notice that although this thesis' narration is mainly conducted by environmental living memories, sometimes these remain in the background as I used other sources to confirm their testimonies and provide evidence of my arguments. It might look as if the story at some points is told from above but, in fact, everything said herein can be traced back either to a peasant perspective or an argument that supports it, which found endorsement in other types of sources. As much as possible this thesis presents both

¹⁰⁹ See the controversy surrounding Rigoberta Menchú and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, 2nd English-language ed (London ; New York: Verso, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Fals Borda, "Comentarios a la mesa redonda sobre la historia doble de la Costa."

qualitative and quantitative evidence. I quote participants directly, mostly when I aim to emphasise the narrative, their choice of words and the impact of their own voice.

Fieldwork

As part of this research project, I conducted two fieldtrips to the sites of study: an exploratory trip during September-October 2018 to contact fixers and visit archives, and the substantive fieldwork visit during March-July 2019. Two fixers per sub-region were part of the initial networking – one academic and one peasant – but more emerged during my fieldwork.

For oral interviews, ethics approval was gained from the Humanities Ethics Committee (Please find the English translation of the 'Participant Information Sheet' and the 'Consent Form' in Appendices 1 and 2). The interviews developed as unstructured informal chats to give the interviewees freedom to tell their stories at their own pace, tailoring them in their own fashion as free-flowing interviews. 'Probable' questions were prepared but applied only if necessary, and all University ethical procedures were followed.

Additional to the interviews, archival visits, and landscape inspections, in each sub-region I actively participated in unplanned events following invitations from peasants who wanted me to witness their current predicaments: a forum in Cartagena where the Marialabaja Irrigation District conflict was discussed, a crowded national coffee growers march, and a peasant presentation in a 'Santurbán *páramo* delimitation' panel. These experiences, although not historical material for the purposes of this thesis, were recorded in my personal notes. They were golden opportunities which shaped my viewpoint, my reflections and were also a substantial part of my learning about how these peasants interpret and framed the historical roots of challenges facing their families and communities.

Analytical Framework

The main software tools I used to manage the sources' inventory were Excel and Zotero. Registers were created for each document, resource, or item, to be categorised. This facilitated filtering, consulting, and establishing dialogues between registers. Ultimately, among the multiple themes and subthemes, my

'data mining' was focused on finding evidence of transformations in both peasantries and landscapes and their associated impacts on food security, food sovereignty and peasants' rights. Then I tagged them to be able to place them in the framework, which served to structure this thesis. Figure 3 shows a highly simplified plan of the framework, with thematic blocks where this thesis' material and sources fall (dates are very roughly assigned). A similar system was used specifically for interviews.

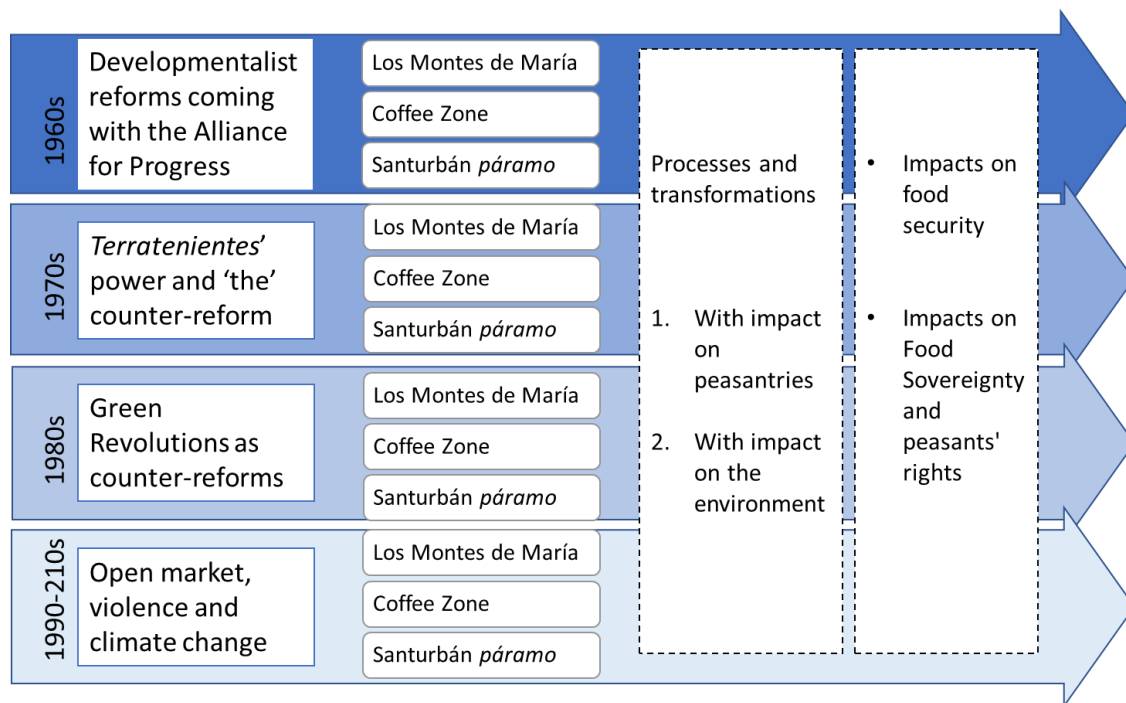


Figure 3. Rough structure of the thesis according to the blocks of evidence's analysis

Positionality

I have moved between diverse fields throughout my professional career and this research project is, in a way, a product of connecting the dots. Coming from an MSc in food security into realising 'The Peasant Food Question' project, I had to dedicate my first PhD year to rigorous training in historical research skills, gaining not only knowledge and abilities but also appreciation for history as a science; history, like science, is based on evidence and inference.

My learning did not stop after the first year; my second year was full of discoveries and growing. I approached my fieldwork with the humility of an *alumna* (needing light), asking the peasants to be my teachers and guides. My involvement with the communities went, and still goes, beyond merely sharing nationality or the fact that my parents both descended from peasants. Topics such as displacement, traditional cuisine, peasant's rooting, rural violence, and

marginalisation are very close to my heart due to the impact of ‘*La Violencia*’ years (1948-1958) on both my parents’ rural lives. Additionally, my own roots lie in one of my sub-regions of study.

Nevertheless, this thesis is written within the frameworks of Global North academia and the hegemonic languages and structures that entails. Therefore, the risk of epistemological extractivism needs to be challenged. I have placed my practice between epistemologies as ‘border thinking’, facilitated by the analytical framework outlined in this introduction, which, through its inclusion of the peasant food sovereignty concept is recognising and utilising alternative forms of knowledge without losing analytical rigour.¹¹¹

Additionally, I believe that the knowledge created from a peasant seed must be harvested where it belongs. My work can only be completed by achieving local impact with my research, which is my ultimate goal. Paraphrasing Lorde, Escobar invites us to use the “master’s tool to push radical revindication ideas forward”.¹¹² Food sovereignty and peasants’ rights are definitely those type of ideas.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised in five chapters. The first is a mini-chapter called ‘*Colombian Environmental and Food Sovereignty Contexts, pre-1961*’ which presents key antecedents to the periods of study. This chapter aims specifically to provide context to the four substantial chapters that follow. Chapters 2 to 5 are those covering the period of study and advancing the main arguments formulated by this thesis.

The second chapter is called ‘*The Swamp, the Mill and the Underwater Parish*’: *Developmentalist top-down reformism in 1960s Colombia*. It deals with the counter-reformist effects of three acts associated with the 1961 Alliance for progress: the Food Aid Act, The International Coffee Agreement (ICA) and the Social and Agrarian Reform (SAR) law. Although it recognises some benefits brought by developmentalist reforms and policies it mainly aims to show the anti-peasant nature of some of them, and why their top-down application set the

¹¹¹ Border thinking is a decolonial concept that involves learning from alternative knowledge systems. See Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 111.

¹¹² Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 2020, xviii.

foundations for subsequent depeasantisations and dismantlement of elements of food sovereignty existing in the 1960s in these territories.

The third chapter, *'The Landless Women': Gendering Peasant Food Security and Food Sovereignty in 1970s Counter-reformist Colombia*, is centred on the counter-reform which arose from the elites' agreement called the Chicoral Pact and the *terratiente* coalition behind it. It explores the nature of political and economic elites' co-operation which fuelled most of the anti-peasant developmentalist policies oppressing these communities, and here focuses on the patriarchal aspects of anti-peasant policies which are identified as colonial legacies. Therefore, while the second chapter has an emphasis on the neo-colonial character of anti-peasant reforms, the third one introduces the internal colonialism and the counter-reform establishment by local agrarian elites. It also questions the *terratiente*/peasantry dichotomy analysing how 'good landlordship' and even patriarchal peasant leaderships contributed to the undermining of food sovereignty. To do so, this chapter foregrounds peasant women's voices and gendered experiences; which not only reflect entirely the legacy of colonialism and oppression behind counter-reformist moves in Colombia, but also nuance the traditional histories of the peasant organisation and the *terratiente* coalitions contained in official sources, which are also male sources.

The fourth chapter, *'The Green Poison': Decolonising Environmental Histories of Green Revolutions in Peasantries*, deals with the Green Revolution that promoted profitability and productivity above the socio-environmental considerations that affected peasantries. These processes started in Colombia in the 1950s, but in the sub-regions of study they were mainly concentrated in and around the 1980s and were linked to the crop migrations, industrialisation and displacement promoted by counter-reforms studied in the previous chapters. This chapter evidences how significant environmental costs were incurred by making agriculture less 'peasant-like' to maximise profit, resulting in landscape deterioration and vast environmental damage in the three sub-regions.

Lastly the fifth chapter, which is called *'Peasantries of El Dorado': Market-based reforms, multiple stressors on food sovereignty and depeasantisation in the neoliberal era*, explores the impacts of open market and neoliberal reforms. It analyses how these processes interacted with rural

violence and environmental injustices related to climate change and use of resources such as water to take peasants to an extreme low point of vulnerability, instability and victimisation.

In recent years, and beyond the timeframe of this study, Colombian peasants have responded to these waves of repression, depeasantisation, market pressure and different types of violence with repeasantisation strategies which are briefly outlined in the epilogue to highlight peasant agency and resilience.

CHAPTER 1. Colombian Environmental and Food Sovereignty Contexts, pre-1961

Colombia's modern history has been indelibly shaped by processes of colonization and contestation, over land and its produce. This introductory chapter aims to provide a brief environmental and historical overview to give contextual background on the country's socio-political environmental history, and to flesh out the cultures and food security situations prior to 1961 in the three case study sub-regions. As this chapter discusses in the case of Colombia's multiple rural complexities and conflicts, the impact of geographical factors should not be underestimated. Therefore, for an investigation that searches for socioenvironmental impacts of rural policies, such as this one, the analyses must be transferred to the ecoregional level. One consequence of adopting the idea of a country of regions where peasantries differ noticeably from one location to the other is that any inference drawn about counter-reformist impacts of agri-food policies must be situated. However, by examining in parallel three highly dissimilar sub-regions, this thesis evidences coincidences and similarities leading to conclusive assessments of the effect of agrarian reforms on Colombian peasantries and their peasant landscape, which hold a higher probability to be generalisable, if done with care.

This chapter provides very basic contexts to the sub-regions of study in three general aspects. First, their geographical characteristics including terrestrial landscapes and human geography briefs. Second, historical contexts mainly about colonisation patterns and formation of the peasantries involved in this thesis' research. Finally, a rough assessment of the state of their food security and food sovereignty by 1960.

Colombian Environments

Colombianist historians have emphasised the highly fragmented territoriality in Colombian society and its history, due to the country's

exceptionally challenging topography.¹ Impenetrable terrain has been a main ingredient of conflict due to its mismanagement during and after the Spanish occupation. It was a barrier to the conquerors, who consequently created weak institutions and economic barriers. Colombia is a tropical megadiverse territory which boasts a wide range of different climate zones and geological landscapes, including highlands, grasslands, and jungles, some of which are still today semi-isolated. It counts 314 different types of ecosystems, with ten percent of the planet's biodiversity.² Out of 7039 plants classified as 'human food', 3805 are – or have been – present in the Colombian territory but only 146 are currently cultivated.³ Thanks to those characteristics, Colombia's agriculture is also shaped by a wide diversity of pathogens both native and introduced. It also has strong climate cycles, and is subject to the extractive ambitions of both foreigners and locals.⁴ Regarding agriculture, temperate crops – which are a main part of the local diet due to Hispanic legacies – have a limited yield under its tropical conditions, and farming in general is affected by irregular soil fertility and extreme rain regimens.⁵ This seems obvious yet is greatly forgotten in discourses such as the 'equal conditions competition' used in the 2000s when the country joined the free market: in Colombia, the sunshine hours per day are fairly constant all year, there is no spring to boost plant growing nor winter withdrawal of predators. Higher altitudes favour temperate crops such as wheat, potatoes, or maize, but the conditions for their growing are different than in the temperate zones of the Global North, and the varieties should be different and well adapted. Furthermore, the rain regimes and their cycles – including the El

¹ Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*; Rex A. Hudson and Library of Congress, eds., *Colombia: A Country Study*, 5th ed, Area Handbook Series 550–26 (Washington, D.C: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 2010); Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*, Latin American Histories (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

² CBD, 'Colombia - Country Profile', *UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)* <<https://www.cbd.int/countries/?country=co>> [accessed 23 June 2018]; Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible and UNDP, Fifth National Biodiversity Report of Colombia for the Convention on Biological Diversity (Quinto Informe Nacional de Biodiversidad de Colombia Ante El Convenio de Diversidad Biológica), 5th edn (Bogotá, Colombia, 2014).

³ B. Gori et al., "Understanding the Diversity and Biogeography of Colombian Edible Plants," *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (May 12, 2022): 7835.

⁴ Moreno, Rueda, and Andrade, *Biodiversity 2017. Status and Trends of Continental Biodiversity in Colombia*.

⁵ On the productivity of temperate crops in Colombia: Salomón Kalmanovitz and Enrique López, "La agricultura en Colombia entre 1950 y 2000," *Borradores de Economía*, no. 197 (October 2013): 1–45; Kalmanovitz and López E., *The Colombian Agriculture in the XX Century (La Agricultura Colombiana En El Siglo XX)*.

Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) – introduce a type of seasonality shaped by either water abundance or scarcity. As figure 4 shows, Colombia holds a geolocation with moderated soil fertility, extreme temperatures, high precipitation levels, and varying altitudes. Additionally, its principal watersheds are located among rugged mountain structures.

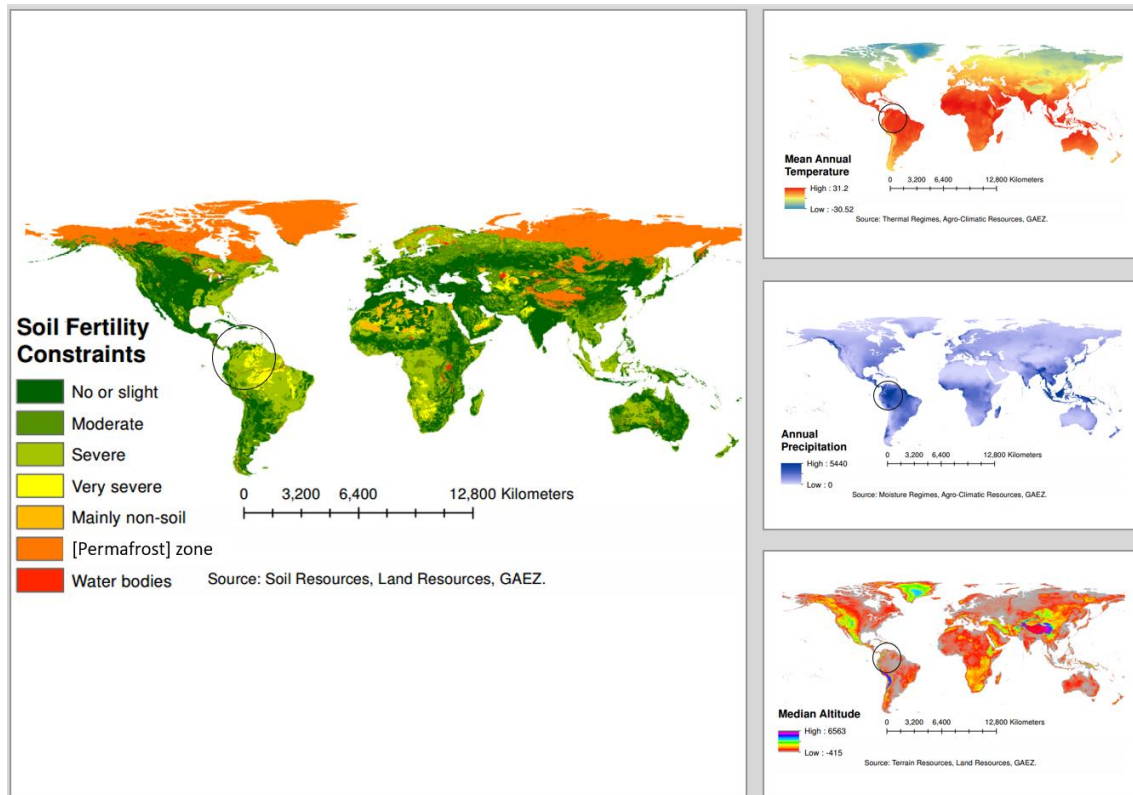


Figure 4. Land characteristics around the world according to Restuccia D, Adamopoulos T Colombia's locations is demarked by shadowed circles. (Image edited to correct spelling).⁶

Colombia comprises five continental ecoregions (regional-scale ecosystem units): 'biogeographical Chocó' in the West bordering the Pacific coasts, Caribbean flatlands (North), Amazon (South), Orinoquía (Eastern savannahs bordering Venezuela), and the central Andes mountains.⁷ The figure 5 map shows the routes taken during the fieldwork in the micro-regions selected for this study: 1) Los Montes de María, in the Caribbean region 2) the agrarian landscapes in the Santurbán *paramo* (moorland), in the Northeastern Andes;

⁶ Diego Restuccia and Tasso Adamopoulos, "Geography and Agricultural Productivity: Cross-Country Evidence from Micro Plot-Level Data," 2017 Meeting Papers (Society for Economic Dynamics, 2017).

⁷ See Bruce Byers, 'Ecoregions, State Sovereignty and Conflict', *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, 22.1 (1991), 65–76.

and 3) the coffee corridor, or Coffee Axis, as it is known locally, in central Andes (for detail maps of the case study sub-regions, see figures 7, 8 and 9).⁸

⁸ See Oscar Arango Gaviria, "Ecoregion Coffee Corridor: A Regional Development Experience in Colombia," *Architecture, City and Environment* 7 (June 2008): 199–220; Bibiana Duarte-Abadía and Rutgerd Boelens, "Disputes over Territorial Boundaries and Diverging Valuation Languages: The Santurban Hydrosocial Highlands Territory in Colombia," *Water International* 41, no. 1 (January 2, 2016): 15–36; Coronado Delgado and Dietz, "Controlling Territories, Restructuring Socio-Ecological Relations: The Globalization of Agrofuels and Their Local Effects, the Case of Montes de María in Colombia (Controlando Territorios, Reestructurando Relaciones Socio-Ecológicas: La Globalización de Agrocombustibles y Sus Efectos Locales, El Caso de Montes de María En Colombia)," March 2013.



Figure 5. Colombia's physical map and fieldwork routes
 Source: Adaptation using a base map by the Geographical Institute Agustín Codazzi IGAC.⁹

⁹ Please note that the original scale of 1:7500000 does not apply since the map is slightly reduced to fit the document margins. Please note that the same applies to all maps. To have an idea, consider that from Los Montes de María to the Coffee Axis there are approximately 500 Km (about 312 miles, similar to the distance between Bristol and Glasgow), and from there to Santurbán, about 380 Km. IGAC, *Mapa Físico, República de Colombia. Escala 1:100.000, 1:7.500.000* (Colombia: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, 2012).

Figure 6 shows a vegetation classification scheme by altitude which is useful to evidence the altitudinal differences among the landscapes studied by this thesis: Los Montes de María corresponds to type 8, a tropical dry forest with warm weather all year; the Coffee Zone is located in the slopes at sub-Andean forest and temperate altitudes at type 5; and the agrarian communities of Santurbán are dispersed in types 2 and 3 enduring very low temperatures.

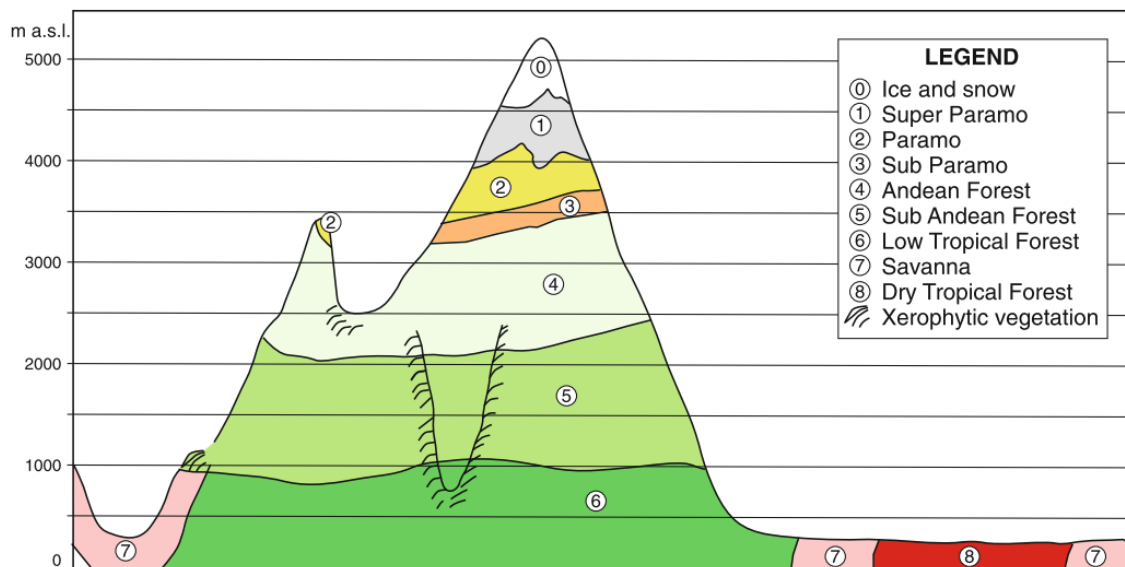


Figure 6. Vertical vegetation belts in Colombia. "Distribution for the Eastern Cordillera, which is fairly the representative of the rest of the country". Taken from adaptation by Hemelin (2016) of an original scheme made by Van der Hammen in 1992.¹⁰

In an oversimplification of the human geography, it can be said that peasantries in the higher lands such as Santurbán were mostly descendants of indigenous groups, while in the Caribbean they were *cimarrones* (maroon), who were fugitive African enslaved peoples, and native Indians. The Coffee Axis, as most of the Cauca Valley temperate zones, is recognised as a product of waves of migration and occupation known as the Antioquean colonisation, mainly conducted by landless *criollos* (creoles) and peasants. This ethnic aspect is of the highest importance and will be further explored throughout this thesis in the interest of highlighting the racism assimilated in patronising and repressive agrarian counter-reformism.

¹⁰ Michel Hermelin, ed., *Landscapes and Landforms of Colombia*, World Geomorphological Landscapes (Cham: Springer, 2016), 17.

Case Studies

Because this thesis is focused on peasantries as socio-Nature units, the peasant territories studied are just a small sub-section of the three mentioned sub-regions. My work is focused on the peasant communities or groups with certain characteristic homogeneities, within territories which are also as homogeneous as possible for each case study. The 2019 fieldwork, then, combined pre-planned routes with those that ensued from organically following the existent peasants' networks. These routes ended up breaking administrative boundaries, a common feature in all three cases, so it seemed clear from the beginning that, from the peasants' viewpoint, the invisible lines traced to separate departments are an artificial imposition.

At a larger scale, the sub-regions containing the territories of study belong not only to different ecoregions but can also be understood as part of transnational macro-regions. As such, I suggest that they could be related to peasantries outside the Colombian borders, in similar Latin American contexts. The peasants in Santurbán, who self-identify as *paramunos*, are closer to other peasantries in the Andean highlands such as in Ecuador or Perú, who face similar conflicts and issues.¹¹ Similarly, peasants in Los Montes de María who self-identify as Afro-peasants belong to the Great Caribbean and share with their peers emancipatory stories of settlements by enslaved ancestors who broke their own chains, as well as culinary heritage and some agrarian techniques.¹² The coffee corridor, in turn, could share experiences with peasantries inscribed in the international market of tropical commodities. This is the case of the environmental history of the leaf rust and its relation to coffee's Green Revolution, which is, in fact, a journey through three continents, as McCook has demonstrated.¹³

The Coffee Axis is a popular name for the sub-region where coffee production was initially concentrated, and it still holds the coffee Federation

¹¹ Rodrigo de la Cruz et al., eds., *Gente y ambiente de páramo: realidades y perspectivas en el Ecuador* (Quito, Ecuador: EcoCiencia, Proyecto Páramo Andino : Abya-Yala : Condesa : GEF : PNUMA, 2009); Karen Hildahl et al., *Mujeres de los páramos* (International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2017).

¹² Judith Ann Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); Clinton L. Beckford and Kevon Rhiney, eds., *Globalization, agriculture and food in the Caribbean: climate change, gender and geography* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

¹³ McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever*.

FEDECAFÉ headquarters as well as the research centre Cenicafé in Chinchiná. It is formed by the departments Caldas, Quindío and Risaralda (Figure 7). This thesis visited the first two, focusing on small coffee growers or rural workers who live and administer the farms and self-identify as peasants. It is important to acknowledge that there are indigenous peasant communities along this route, but a focus on indigenous groups is out of the scope of this thesis. This is because the category ‘indigenous’ in Colombia is reserved for tribes which have survived since pre-Columbus times, therefore indigenous groups would add other variables of analysis to the complexity of this research.¹⁴

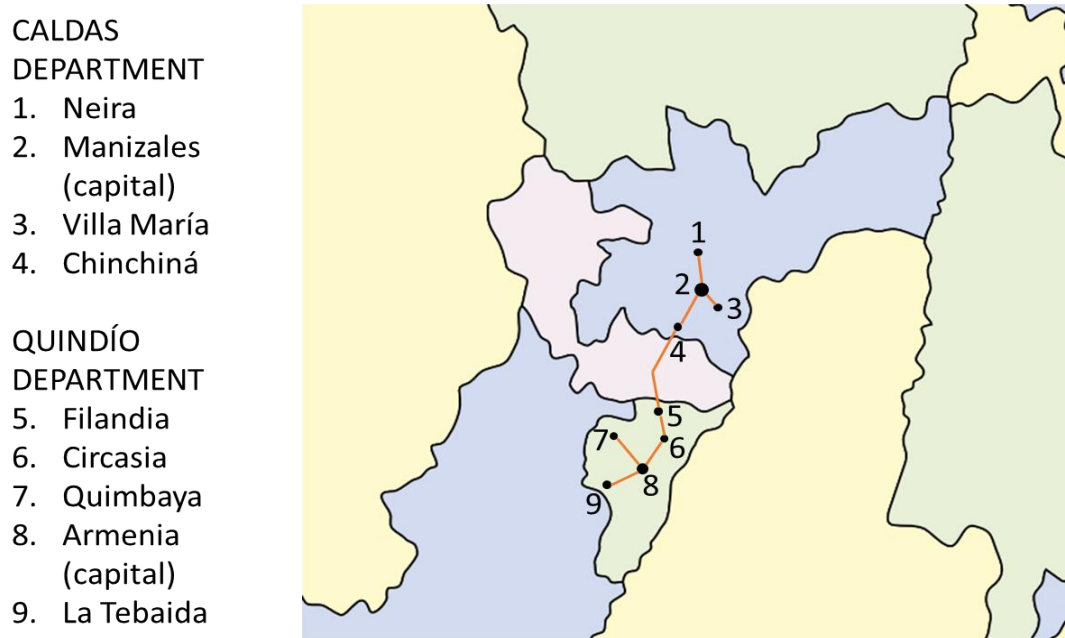


Figure 7. Coffee Axis route map. This indicates towns visited in 2019 fieldwork for this research. Author's elaboration based on a basic map from d-maps.com.¹⁵

Moving on to the Northeast, the Santurbán sub-region is a *nudo* or *macizo* (massif), a ‘complex’ or arrangement of various high peaks with *páramo* ecosystem areas characterised by Andean moorland tundra-type of vegetation, and various headwaters.¹⁶ The *páramo* biomes are known as endemic from Ecuador, Perú, Venezuela and Colombia, but it is the latter which holds fifty

¹⁴ Colombia only recognises as indigenous groups those tribes that existed in pre-Columbus times and have a culture and language of their own.

¹⁵ Base-map: d-maps, *Colombia - Departments*, 1:7.500.000 (France: d-maps.com, 2007), d-maps.com/carte.php.

¹⁶ Mónica Morales Rivas et al., *Atlas de páramos de Colombia* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2007).

percent of the *páramo* lands currently existing on the planet.¹⁷ These biomes are key to the collection of water from the atmosphere and its transfer to large lagoons and rivers, through their cushion-plants and treelike *frailejones* (*Espeletia*).¹⁸ *Paramuno* lagoon systems have enormous capacity and have supplied cities as massive as Bogotá for decades. Image 2 shows a sample of *paramuno* landscape and vegetation.



Image 2. *Páramo de Santurbán, frailejones in front, headwater in the background.*
Source: IAvH.¹⁹

Santurbán – 9500 feet above the sea level and with temperatures dropping below zero – has two main industries, mining and agriculture. During the Spanish occupation the mining area was known as the Soto Norte province

¹⁷ Carlos Enrique Sarmiento Pinzón et al., *Aportes a la conservación estratégica de los páramos de Colombia actualización de la cartografía de los complejos de páramo a escala 1:100.000* (Bogotá, Col.: Ministerio de ambiente y desarrollo sostenible : Instituto de investigación de recursos biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2013); Carlos Enrique Sarmiento Pinzón and Paula Ungar, eds., *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo mediante la identificación de los límites inferiores del ecosistema a escala 1:25.000 y Análisis del sistema social asociado al territorio: Complejo de páramos Jurisdicciones – Santurbán – Berlín departamentos de Santander y Norte de Santander* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2014).

¹⁸ Morales Rivas et al., *Atlas de páramos de Colombia*.

¹⁹ Pastor Virviescas Gómez, *Vegetación y fuentes de agua en páramo de Santurbán*, June 17, 2016, Photograph, jpg. 600x903 pixels, June 17, 2016, Harris, repository.humboldt.org.co/handle/20.500.11761/5445.

– locally this name is still in use – and the agricultural area was part of the Pamplona province. These are currently part of the departments of Santander and Northern Santander, respectively. Figure 8 shows two roads connecting Bucaramanga, Santander’s capital, with the *páramo*. The road route leading to Tona, the agricultural municipality of Soto Norte province, goes further to mining towns such as California and Vetas, the epicentre of the current environmental conflict with the presence of multinational gold mining corporations. This research mainly followed the secondary road route which connects with Pamplona, and where the food grower peasantries have established their settlements.

- NORTHERN SANTANDER DEPARTMENT
1. Pamplona
 2. Mutiscua
 3. Santo Domingo de Silos
 4. Chitagá
- SANTANDER DEPARTMENT
5. Tona
 6. Bucaramanga (capital)
- Other key places
7. Pachacual peasant settlement
 8. Berlín onion growers settlement
 9. El Guamal small dairy settlement

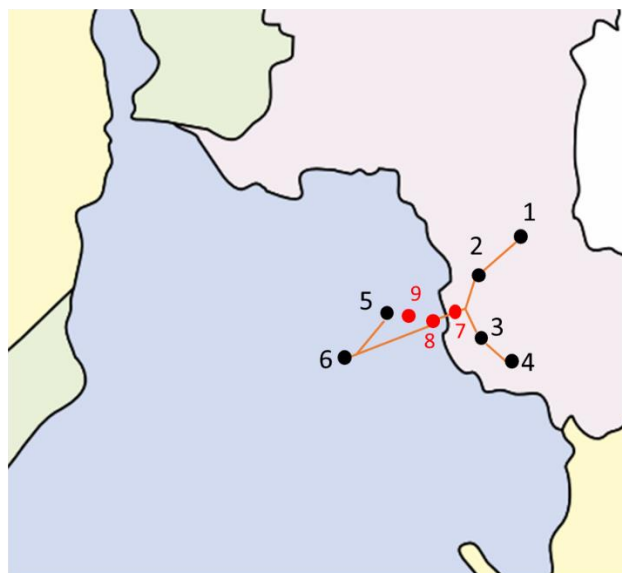


Figure 8. Santurbán route map. This indicates towns visited in 2019 fieldwork for this research. Also locates three main high-land peasantries visited in Berlín and El Guamal (which belong to Tona municipality of Santander), and Pachacual (Santo Domingo de Silos, Northern Santander) Author’s elaboration based on a basic empty map from d-maps.com.²⁰

Moving north, in the Caribbean region, there is a low mountain range called *Serranía de San Jacinto*, widely known in Colombia as Los Montes de María, located in the departments Sucre and Bolívar. Here, in contrast with Santurbán, the most elevated peaks are no more than a thousand feet above sea level, although some peasants talk about the *Alta Montaña* (high mountain) there, and temperatures can rise up above 30 degrees.²¹ In the *Alta Montaña*,

²⁰ Base-map: d-maps, “Colombia - Departments.”

²¹ Fieldwork observation.

multiple rivers are born and feed the Matuya and El Playón reservoirs that were built during the agrarian reform under the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s (see Figure 9). This sub-region was the focus of various reformist projects and an epicentre of the peasant movement in the 1970s, and has been highly impacted by the armed conflict at the end of the last century.

BOLÍVAR DEPARTMENT

1. María La Baja
2. San Juan
Nepomuceno
3. Carmen de Bolívar
4. Zambrano

SUCRE DEPARTMENT

5. Ovejas
6. Los Palmitos
7. Sincelejo (capital)

Other key places

8. El Playón Reservoir
9. Matuya Reservoir
10. Camarón peasant settlement

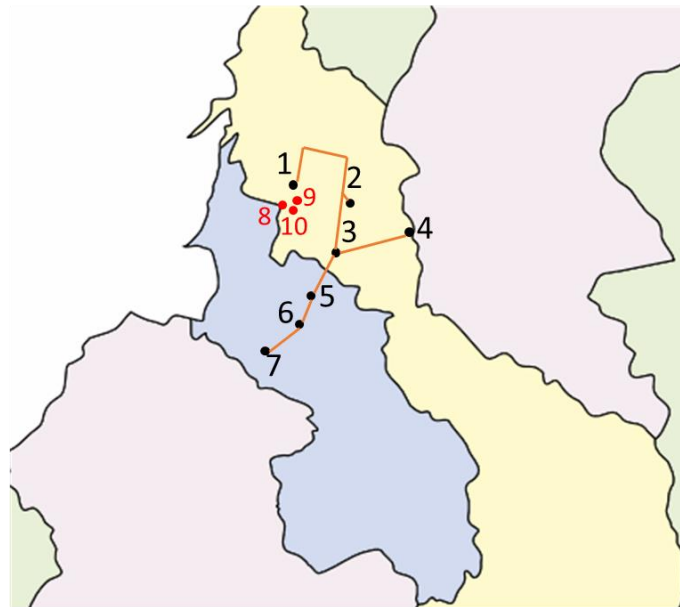


Figure 9. Los Montes de María route map. Towns visited in 2019 fieldwork for this research. Author's elaboration based on a basic empty map from d-maps.com.²²

Three Groups of Peasantries: Montemarianos, *paramunos* and *cafeteros*

The peasantries involved in this project have adopted identities which connect them with their territories or their landscape – as *paramunos* if they inhabit *páramos* in Santurbán, *cafeteros* (coffee growers) in the Coffee Axis, or in Los Montes de María as *Montemarianos*, or depending on their cultural or ethnic roots, as ‘Afro-peasantries’. To give an oversimplified perspective, coffee growers are mostly descended from settler colonisers who established themselves in the global market through association with bigger farmers and coffee producers; while *Montemariano* peasantries are organised as more

²² Base-map: d-maps, “Colombia - Departments.”

autonomous and self-sufficient communities who are proud of their African and indigenous inheritances.²³ *Paramuno* peasantries, in turn, see themselves as non-white *mestizos* and indigenous' descendants – after all, towns like Santo Domingo de Silos were, until times prior to the independence, considered as *pueblos de indios* (towns of the Indians).²⁴ In Santurbán communities are built from exchange of resources, labour and cooperation, but their cohesion is not as strong as in the remaining peasant settlements in Los Montes de María.²⁵ This outline on the identity and ethnicity of peasantries participating in this research is relevant as this thesis maintains, following Rivera-Cusicanqui, that anti-peasant endeavours have been not only classist and patriarchal, but also racist.

In general, the agrarian question debate in Colombia has been highly 'colour-blind' – or more precisely, 'ethnicity-blind' which has allowed the government to deny some peasant communities' special rights creating conflict in a multicultural constitutionalist regime. Some scholars, however, have applied categories such as indigenous, Afro-descendant, or *mestizo* peasants in their studies.²⁶ The 1991 Constitution granted indigenous and Afro-descendant peasants special rights in law, including rights to land tenure and self-determination, whereas peasants from other ethnic backgrounds have been excluded as subjects from these collective rights. This has meant that ethnic self-recognition has become an appealing political strategy for non-white peasantries to access rights, leading to an 'indigenisation' of the peasantry in the 1990s.²⁷ Such protections created inequalities in some multi-ethnic peasant

²³ According to Ocampo, the *colonos* (peasant settlers) were the true founders in the Coffee Axis. Ángel María Ocampo Cardona, *Paisajes inexplorados de la historia caldense*, Obras Históricas 12 (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia: Editorial Manigraf, 2015). See also James Jerome Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia: An Historical Geography* (Berkeley: University of California, 1949); Eloisa Berman Arévalo, "The 'Ruinous Failure' of Agrarian Reform in Key of Blackness: Afro-Peasant Communities and Liberal Recognition in Montes de María, Colombia," *Memorias*, no. 30 (May 15, 2019): 117–49; *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*, *Los Montes de María*, Recording (Cartagena, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).

²⁴ Pablo E Cárdenas Acosta, *El Movimiento Comunal de 1781 En El Nuevo Reino de Granada: (Reivindicaciones Históricas)*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Kelly, 1960).

²⁵ Fieldwork observations.

²⁶ See LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936*; Sutti Ortiz, 'Reflections on the Concept of "Peasant Culture" and "Peasant Cognitive Systems"', in *Peasant and Peasant Societies*, ed. by Theodor Shanin, Penguin Modern Sociology Readings (Great Britain: Penguin Ed, 1971), pp. 322–36; Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia*.

²⁷ Christian Gros, *Políticas de la etnicidad: identidad, estado y modernidad* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia (ICANH), 2012).

territories under current jurisprudence.²⁸ Currently, most Colombian peasant organisations, if not all, demand the adoption of the UNDROP as set of special rights for peasants incorporated to the Constitution and the law to balance that asymmetry.

This thesis recognises the right of peasants to ethnic self-recognition and cultural identity, which is linked to a diverse, mottled and complex heritage. Even among peasants within the same – mostly Andean – communities, divergences are not unusual when it comes to reaching agreements about presenting a consistent message to civil society about their self-recognition as a collective. This remains a field in dispute through internal reflections and discussions within the peasantries themselves that are still far from being concluded. Therefore, the present thesis' fieldwork and research recognise these nuances and circumscribe analyses to those narratives and discourses that already have certain consensus within peasantries involved, according to its participants.

²⁸ Carlos Arturo Osorio Pérez, “Campos en movimiento. algunas reflexiones sobre acciones colectivas de pobladores rurales en Colombia,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 52, no. 1 (June 2016): 41–61; Vladimir Montaña Mestizo, “Etnogénesis, desindigenización y campesinismos. apuntes para una reflexión teórica del cambio cultural y las relaciones interculturales del pasado,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 52, no. 1 (January 2016): 63–90.



Image 3. Photographs of peasants from Los Montes de María and Santurbán sub-regions. Top-left: Photograph by 'Unión Campesina del Páramo de Santurbán' (Peasant Union of the Santurbán Páramo) 2021; top-right: Fieldwork photograph taken in El Carmen de Bolívar in 2019; bottom-left: Fieldwork photograph taken in San Juan Nepomuceno in 2019, bottom-right: photograph by Trino Antonio Villamizar, Santo Domingo de Silos, c.a. 2008.²⁹

Beyond ethnicity and rights which remain unrecognised by the Colombian government, peasantries consider themselves as 'native' to their territories as expressed by some *paramuno* peasants: “yo soy *natural/raizal de aquí*” (I am natural to, or have roots here).³⁰ This means to them that for generations their families have inhabited that land, and that they claim rights by virtue of being completely 'rooted'.

Another important aspect common to these peasantries is that, to a greater or lesser extent, they have small commercial or cash crops. In other words, as defined by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), they differ from an indigenous agriculture

²⁹ Fredy Alonso Maldonado, *Photo of a Paramuno Peasant*, 2021, Photograph, 946x946pixels 220dpi, 2021, Unión Campesina del Páramo de Santurbán; Trino Antonio Villamizar, *Children Loading a Mule*, ca 1985, Photograph, ca 1985, Donated by Trino Antonio Villamizar, Santo Domingo de Silos.

³⁰ *Memories of Participant No.83 Anonymous (Interview 57)*, Santurbán, Recording (Santodomingo de Silos, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.87 Anonymous (Interview 61)*, Santurbán, Recording (Tona, Santander, Colombia, 2019).

in the fact that they do not produce food exclusively for themselves, but they also sell, or aspire to sell, part of it to the market.³¹ As such, peasants were considered by the Colombian government and society to be the most significant producers in the agricultural sector in 1961.³² After more than five decades of counter-reforms which have brought loss of food sovereignty and depeasantisation, however, it seems that they have been treated more as a liability than as an asset, as this thesis demonstrates.

Colonisation: Shaping Land and Food Cultures

Modern Colombian environmental and social history has been strongly shaped by processes of Spanish colonisation between 1492 and 1810. The case study sub-regions were all populated by different original indigenous groups and affected unevenly by the impact of Spanish colonisation.³³ In terms of food, pre-Hispanic Colombia has been considered highly sustainable and agrodiverse, with availability of food all year that was nutritionally balanced and energetically rich. The historical scholarship in Colombia has claimed that there was no known famine in the pre-Columbian era, although this is hard to establish in all rigour. There were no cattle and, although some studies reveal small-scale breeding of ducks and guinea pigs, animal protein was mainly provided by fishing and wild meat.³⁴ Colonisation added value to the agriculture and enriched the diet through a food 'miscegenation' which incorporated important staples such as wheat and rice; unfortunately, this also caused the advent of unknown diseases, and of land appropriation by the Spanish crown.³⁵

³¹ ECLAC, "Economía campesina y mercado de alimentos: una aproximación teórica" (Santiago, Chile, September 25, 1984), LC/L.307, repositorio.cepal.org.

³² As recognised in the Memories of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Congress, registered in a document called: *Colombia campesina* (Peasant Colombia) Otto Morales Benitez, *Colombia campesina: Memorias del Ministerio de Agricultura* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1961).

³³ Jorge Orlando Melo, *Historia mínima de Colombia*, Primera edición, Colección Historias Mínimas (Madrid : México, D.F: Turner Publicaciones ; El Colegio de México, 2017).

³⁴ Peter Stahl, "Pre-Columbian Andean Animal Domesticates at the Edge of Empire," *World Archaeology* 34, no. 3 (January 2003): 470–83; Peter W. Stahl, "Animal Domestication in South America," in *The Handbook of South American Archaeology*, ed. Helaine Silverman and William H. Isbell (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2008), 121–30.

³⁵ Melo, *Historia Mínima de Colombia*; Nicolás Cuvi, "Indigenous Imprints and Remnants in the Tropical Andes," in *A Living Past: Environmental Histories of Modern Latin America* (New York: Berghahn, 2018); Soluri, "Home Cooking"; Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia*.

The eighteenth century Bourbon reforms boosted export-oriented tropical agricultural products in what the colonisers called '*insalubres tierras calientes*' (unhealthy warm-lands), creating large plantations and encouraging the migration of investors and labour.³⁶ These reforms promoted tobacco plantations in zones like Los Montes de María, as well as the first coffee *haciendas* (estates) and small farms in the Andean slopes.³⁷ They also worked as peasantising processes, not only due to the migration waves but also to the assimilation of some indigenous peoples into the peasantries' development.³⁸ These reforms motivated massive waves of migration in what Palacio calls the *fiebre de tierra caliente* (warm-land fever) undertaken by settlers looking for land to make their fortunes.³⁹ The migration originating in the Antioquia department in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries followed the Magdalena River, first to the south to settle in the Coffee Axis and then both further south and to the north where they displayed a highly asymmetric competition for lands with indigenous and *cimarrón* communities in the Caribbean savannahs of Córdoba or Sucre departments.⁴⁰ These peasant settlement movements called *colonizaciones* (land colonisations) began under colonial rule and extended after independence. Therefore, in Colombia, it became customary to call the peasants '*colonos*', meaning first farmer dwellers, settlers or founders, coming from the Latin word *colonus* which means "a husbandman, tiller of the soil".⁴¹ What today is Colombia was under the Spanish domination for almost three centuries, so, by the time the Bourbon reforms were implemented, the

³⁶ Melo, *Historia mínima de Colombia*; Medardo Rivas, *Los trabajadores de tierra caliente* (Bogotá, Colombia: Prensas de la Universidad Nacional, 1946).

³⁷ Orlando Fals Borda, *Historia doble de la Costa*, 2a ed (1979 1. ed) (Bogota: Valencia, 1984); Eduardo Posada Carbó, *The Colombian Caribbean: A Regional History, 1870-1950*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford [England ; New York]: Clarendon Press, 1996); Melo, *Historia mínima de Colombia*; Marco Palacios Roza, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850 - 1970: An Economic, Social and Political History*, 1. paperback ed, Cambridge Latin American Studies 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002); Luis Eduardo Nieto Arteta, *El café en la sociedad colombiana*, 5. ed (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1981).

³⁸ Fals Borda, *Historia doble de la Costa*; Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia*; James Jerome Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia: An Historical Geography* (Berkeley: University of California, 1949); Nancy P. Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948*, Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1850-1936*; Catherine LeGrand, "Colombian Transformations: Peasants and Wage-labourers in the Santa Marta Banana Zone," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 11, no. 4 (July 1984): 178–200.

³⁹ Palacio Castañeda, *Fiebre de tierra caliente*.

⁴⁰ Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization*, 1949.

⁴¹ Perseus Digital Library, "Latin Word Study Tool," University, accessed June 15, 2020, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text>.

indigenous tribes had already been decimated and gathered in reserves or were being absorbed by the peasantries and many lands were considered vacant. Therefore, in general, the peasant migrations which occurred during and after the Bourbon reforms could be understood as a process of settler colonialism, although they hold important differences with the American settler colonialism concept. Settler colonialism in other latitudes was a process of violent indigenous displacement; in the case of Colombia, this had already occurred two centuries previously and most of the land settled through these peasant migrations was vacant. It is important to remember that indigenous peoples remaining out of reserves in times of the Bourbon reforms had already gone through processes of peasantisation, as happened in Santo Domingo de Silos. Therefore, their lands, for instance, were not vacant. In *palenques*, black communities either shared or established contending territorialities alongside some indigenous groups and created networks of communities. After the independence in 1819, in the republican Colombia, according to the legal tradition adopted, peasant *colonos* could settle in empty vacant lands recognised as *baldíos*. According to the same tradition, once the peasant *colonos* had established *morada y labranza* (home and farm) in a rural area, they were entitled to own those lands.⁴²

After independence, territories in flatter, warmer lands such as the Caribbean savannahs inherited a colonial *latifundio* land tenancy structure, and extended its domains to increase plantation-style cultivated tropical products to export.⁴³ Others – mostly Andean slopes and plateaus – developed peasant *minifundio* areas. In the early Republican period, the nineteenth century liberal reforms accentuated this land injustice by enhancing the tropical exports' profile and consequently stimulating a legal land-grabbing of large acreage by private powerful *latifundistas* called *terratenientes* during the *fiebre-de-tierra-caliente* (Warm-land fever).⁴⁴ These came not only from Antioquia; international

⁴² Law 61 of 1874. This was an adaptation of the old royal norm of 'dwelling and work'. Medardo Rivas, ed., *Recopilación de las Leyes y Disposiciones Vigentes sobre Tierras Baldías* (Compilation of Current Laws and Regulations on Vacant-Lands) (Bogota, Colombia: Imprenta de Medardo Rivas, 1884).

⁴³ Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*.

⁴⁴ Palacio Castañeda, *Fiebre de tierra caliente*; Palacio Castañeda, *Territorios improbables, historias y ambientes*.

investors arrived too.⁴⁵ Simultaneously, the liberal reforms created numerous *minifundia* by dismantling collective properties, such as the *ejidos* and indigenous *resguardos*, to promote individual private property.⁴⁶ Most peasant *colonos* widening the agrarian frontiers were thus pushed toward colder areas. In some so-called 'colonisation areas', usually *baldíos*, conflicts between peasant *colonos* and absent landlords who claimed the lands became frequent. These confrontations extended to the twentieth century and the first attempts of agrarian reform aimed to mediate them.⁴⁷ The end of the nineteenth century was in general characterised by barbed wire imports to enclose land and the emergence of an agricultural oligarchy organised in the Colombian Agriculturists Society (SAC).⁴⁸

Cycles of invasion and expulsion became common, particularly among coffee growers. Landlords created 'colonising companies' or societies to use their influence to appropriate peasant *baldíos*. The conflicts created were called *del hacha contra el papel sellado* (of the axe against the sealed paper), and accentuated the already existing power asymmetry.⁴⁹ In the Old Caldas department, what today is the Coffee Axis – Quindío, Risaralda and Caldas departments – there were two famous conflicts over land: the Aranzazu Concession in Caldas; and the Burila Society in Quindío.⁵⁰ The peasant colonisation in Quindío required a tough negotiation with the Burila Society members, which was settled in the end in favour of the peasant *colonos* in 1912

⁴⁵ Ulianov Chalarka, *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*, ed. Fundación Punta de Lanza, Bogotá and Fundación Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Montería (Montería, Córdoba, Colombia: Fundación del Sinú. Apartado Aereo 479. Montería, 1985).

⁴⁶ Fals Borda, *Historia de la cuestión agraria en Colombia*; Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*; Margarita Rosa Pacheco G, "Ejidos de Cali: Siglo XIX," *Revista Historia y Espacio* 6 (1980): 8–32.

⁴⁷ Morales Benitez, *Colombia campesina: Memorias del Ministerio de Agricultura*.

⁴⁸ Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*.

⁴⁹ Melo, *Historia mínima de Colombia*.

⁵⁰ Various scholars have described the *colonos'* settlement conflicts: Parsons, *Antioqueño Colonization*, 1949; Otto Morales Benitez, *Testimonio de un pueblo: interpretación económico-social de la colonización de Antioquia en Caldas - La fundación de Manizales*, 2d ed. (1951, 1st ed.) (Manizales, Colombia: Imprenta del Banco de la República, 1962); Albeiro Valencia Llano, *Colonización: fundaciones y conflictos agrarios, Gran Caldas y norte del Valle* (Manizales, Colombia: Artes Gráficas Tizan, 2001); Hermes Tovar Pinzón, *Que nos tengan en cuenta: colonos, empresarios y aldeas; Colombia, 1800-1900*, 2. ed, Premios nacionales de cultura, 1994 (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Economía, Ediciones Uniandes, 2015); José Jairo González Arias and Elsy Marulanda Alvarez, *Historias de frontera: Colonización y guerras en el Sumapaz* (Bogotá, Colombia: CINEP, 1990); LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta campesina en Colombia (1850-1950)*; Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850–1970: An Economic, Social, and Political History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Apolinar Díaz Callejas, *Colombia: La reforma agraria y sus documentos fundamentales*, 1. ed (Cartagena: Universidad de Cartagena, 2002).

who were then more interested in defending *cultivos de pancoger* (fast growing and self-supply crops) such as maize, beans, and *arracacha* than in coffee farming.⁵¹ They were eventually incorporated into the coffee production chain, and are direct ancestors of modern coffee grower peasants. After all, “Coffee was something magical, miraculous. It took the country out of nowhere and transformed it”.⁵²

Colombian coffee peasantries developed an exceptional farming model, being connected early on to the international market thanks to the patronage of haciendas’ landowners who organised the first Colombian agrarian guild called *Federación de Cafeteros de Colombia* (coffee growers’ Federation), or FEDECAFÉ, in 1927. The powerful emerging coffee elite managing FEDECAFÉ built an extraordinary capacity to inform and influence the central governments, and also paternalistically assumed the responsibility to adhere small coffee growers and coffee peasantries to enlarge its grassroot bases.⁵³ Other agrarian elites tried to imitate their model decades later, such as the rice growers’ Federation FEDEARROZ in 1947, the cereal growers’ Federation FENALCE in 1966, and the potato growers’ Federation FEDEPAPA in 1974.⁵⁴

In the Caribbean lands, meanwhile, land inequality between black or indigenous peasants and white landowners grew. Land titling there was extremely uneven, skewed in favour of wealthy national and international investors – thousands of hectares each of Caribbean *baldíos* were given as plots to powerful individuals, while in the coffee zone hundreds of hectares were distributed among dozens of people.⁵⁵

In Santurbán, landlords and peasants also shared resources unequally and, according to its inhabitants, titles for both dated back various generations, which made property highly atomised. These highlands, with no tropical

⁵¹ Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular CINEP and Fondo Colombiano de Investigaciones Científicas y Proyectos Especiales Francisco José de Caldas, eds., *Colombia: País de Regiones*, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia : [Colombia]: Cinep ; Colciencias, 1998); Morales Benitez, *Testimonio de un pueblo: interpretación económico-social de la colonización de Antioquia en Caldas - La fundación de Manizales*.

⁵² Horacio Gómez Artibizábal and Academy of History of Quindío, “La colonización del Quindío y su separación de Caldas,” in *Lo que el Quindío le ha aportado a Colombia: Ensayos. Cátedra Quindiana (What Quindío Has Contributed to Colombia: Essays. Quindiana Cathedra)* (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Kelly, 1988), 7.

⁵³ William García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera: El Quindío, un caso paradigmático*, Primera edición (Armenia, Quindío [Colombia]: Centro de Publicaciones, Universidad del Quindío, 2017).

⁵⁴ Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo Histórico Agropecuario Del Periodo Republicano En Colombia*.

⁵⁵ Díaz Callejas, *Colombia; Palacios, Coffee in Colombia, 1850–1970*, 1980.

commodity to export, seemed less impacted by *colono*-related conflicts. The local economies were well established since Spanish domination. The agrarian settlements in Santurbán's south had a considerable indigenous rural population, who farmed wheat, corn, potatoes and legumes to market with mining settlements in the north.⁵⁶ It is documented how, during the late eighteenth century revolts, the *criollos comuneros* convinced these indigenous peoples to join their cause by telling them about Tupac Amaru II's uprising in Peru. The indigenous inhabitants of Santo Domingo de Silos declared independence of the Spanish King and proclaimed themselves subjects of the Inca emperor in 1781.⁵⁷ There are currently no indigenous peoples alive in the Santurbán *paramo* anymore; they most likely have gone through a peasantisation process, but traditions and beliefs remain until today among *paramuno* peasantries. Some of them, like the Cacica Virgin cult, were originally indigenous customs which became incorporated by catholic priests into Christian traditions.⁵⁸ Trade routes and emblematic crops such as maize were also maintained until late in the twentieth century. In 1936 the road which crossed the Santurbán *páramo* from Bucaramanga to Pamplona stimulated the settlement of highlander peasant villages such as Berlín, Pachacual and La Laguna.⁵⁹

It was also in 1936 that Law 200 promulgated to enact land redistribution and to mediate conflicts between landlords and peasants in *colonos* areas.⁶⁰ This was advertised as a major reform by the 'Liberal Republic' government; however, it failed to reallocate abandoned and unexploited *latifundia* to peasants. The government had to concede so many exceptions to redistribution for landlords that it crippled the reform.⁶¹ The standard application implied that

⁵⁶ Martha Leonor Mora Delgado et al., *A qué sabe el norte*, 1st ed. (Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, Colombia: SENA, 2018).

⁵⁷ Pablo E Cárdenas Acosta, *El movimiento comunal de 1781 en el Nuevo Reino de Granada : (Reivindicaciones Históricas)*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Kelly, 1960).

⁵⁸ "El Libro de Oro de Silos" (Official memory register, Santo Domingo de Silos, Colombia, n.d.).

⁵⁹ Carlos Arturo Cabeza Quiñones, *Silos, así queremos verte porque la historia de Silos, es historia comunera, es historia de verdad* (Colombia: Pasto Impresores Angel, 2005).

⁶⁰ República de Colombia, "Law 200/1936," Pub. L. No. 200, 8 (1936).

⁶¹ The discussions are narrated in the main newspaper *El Tiempo*, in its section 'Senate': 'Una fórmula de transacción en el proyecto de ley de tierras (A "Deal" in the Land Bill)', *El Tiempo* (Bogotá, Colombia, 4 December 1936), section La Sesión del Senado, p. 11,13, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Hemeroteca Nacional, Bogotá; 'Nuevas críticas hizo López Pumarejo a la ley de tierras (Lopez Pumarejo Made New Criticisms of the Land Law)', *El Tiempo* (Bogotá, Colombia, 1 December 1936), section La Sesión del Senado, p. 7,13, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Hemeroteca Nacional, Bogotá; 'Se aprobó el Artículo 6o. de la ley de régimen de

peasants should wait between five and ten years working lands before claiming, presuming they were abandoned or *baldíos*, and even then they were usually dislodged by powerful elites claiming property. This law also provoked massive evictions by landowners who opted for production schemes that would not need peasant labour, such as extensive livestock.⁶² Therefore, this only exacerbated land conflicts in subsequent decades.

These frustrated reformist endeavours and the peasantisation of the territories left Colombian peasantries' situation unresolved. As a result, the prevailing agrarian structure in these sub-regions in the 1960s according to Zamosc was: peasant economies in Old Caldas (Coffee Axis) and Santanderes (Santurbán); and traditional latifundia in Bolívar and Sucre (Los Montes de María).⁶³

Two other socio-political trends had significant impacts on agrarian reform in the mid-twentieth century: '*La Violencia*', and the National Front. The violent events of 1948, following the assassination of political leader Jorge-Eliécer Gaitán, detonated a vicious bipartisan armed conflict in the countryside affecting many peasants. This armed conflict is known as '*La Violencia*'. It resulted in the formation of various guerrilla groups and a dictatorship (1953-1957) under General Rojas-Pinilla.⁶⁴ After this, political parties signed a pact which aimed to put an end to both dictatorship and violence. This agreement in essence consisted of alternating the presidency and evenly distributing all public offices among the two major parties for sixteen years (four presidential periods). This scheme was called '*Frente Nacional*' (National Front) and started with the presidency of Alberto Lleras-Camargo (1958); it aimed to 're-found' the nation. Its agrarian reform programme had the support of the Alliance for Progress and the US, and was launched with the enactment of the Law 135 in 1961.

tierras (Article 6 of the Land Regime Law Was Approved)', *El Tiempo* (Bogotá, Colombia, 5 December 1936), section La Sesión del Senado, p. 7, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Hemeroteca Nacional, Bogotá

⁶² "Una fórmula de transacción en el proyecto de ley de tierras," *El Tiempo*, December 4, 1936, sec. La Sesión del Senado, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Hemeroteca Nacional, Bogotá; Díaz Callejas, *Colombia*.

⁶³ See table 1.5 in: Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986, 32.

⁶⁴ See Gonzalo Sánchez G. and Donny Meertens, *Bandits, Peasants, and Politics: The Case of "La Violencia" in Colombia*, 1st University of Texas Press ed, ILAS Translations from Latin America Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001); Karl, *Forgotten Peace*.

After the lack of success of Law 200 of 1936, successive liberal governments in Colombia actively looked abroad for help to start an agrarian industrialisation. Between 1940 and 1960 the country received visits – called ‘missions’ – from a series of international experts on development studies to evaluate both the economy and agriculture, and make recommendations. Operation Colombia which was conducted by Lauchlin Currie from the World Bank in 1949, the agricultural mission from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) in 1955, and the FAO and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1958 were some of those missions.⁶⁵ Currie affirmed that Colombia's 'underdevelopment' was due to a poor distribution of its workforce, which could be corrected by removing peasants from the fields and allocating them to cheap labour activities into the cities.⁶⁶ The IBRD concluded, on the other hand, that land use in Colombia was ‘irrational’.⁶⁷ In fact, most of the international missions – except Currie’s – agreed on the need for an urgent and equitable redistribution of arable land in Colombia, coinciding with the recommendation made by ECLAC for Latin America at the time. The discussion around the agrarian question in Colombia in the 1960s became dominated by the opposing thoughts of ECLAC and Currie; while ECLAC advocated for smaller units and the organised peasant economy as base of the agrarian sector, Currie considered it an inefficient rural development model. According to his study, larger productive crops using less labour would be a better solution. The US aid scheme called Alliance for Progress supported ECLAC’s ideas and that settled the debate.

The Alliance for Progress strategy adhered mostly to the need to counteract the imminent penetration of communist ideas in Latin America,

⁶⁵ FAO, “Andean Indian Mission ILO/FAO 1958-1961” (Misc., Rome, Italy, 1961 1958), FA 14/5, FAO Archives, Rome; FAO, “RG 71.11 Series A1 FAO Country Missions (Colombia) Outgoing Correspondence to FAO Staff” (Correspondence, Rome, Italy, 1958 1955), RG 71.11 Series A1, FAO Archives, Rome.

⁶⁶ ‘Operation Colombia’ is the name given by Currie to his report: Lauchlin Currie, “La operación Colombia,” in *Tierra. 10 ensayos sobre la reforma agraria en Colombia. [By Carlos Lleras Restrepo and others.] Seguidos del texto de la Ley 135 de 1961 sobre “Reforma Social Agraria” y del Decreto No. 3177 de 1961, que la reglamenta*, Part of the “Colección La Tierra” (Bogotá, Colombia, 1962), 253–64; Lauchlin Currie, “The Colombian Plan 1971–74: A Test of the Leading Sector Strategy,” *World Development* 2, no. 10–12 (October 1974): 69–72; Roger J Sandilands and Sandilands, *The Life and Political Economy of Lauchlin Currie New Dealer, Presidential Advisor, and Development Economist* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁶⁷ FAO/IBRD Agricultural Mission to Colombia, “RG 41.0 Series G5 FAO/IBRD Joint Missions Report Colombia 1955” (Correspondence, Rome, Italy, October 20, 1955), RG 41.0 Series G5, FAO Archives, Rome.

particularly among peasantries. The revolutionary wave ignited in Mexico in 1917, Bolivia in 1952 and Cuba in 1959 was characterised by the active involvement of peasants and rural workers, and the structural land reforms achieved in these three cases.⁶⁸ Cuba's revolution was eminently communist. Therefore, to stop the 'red' advance in Latin America, and led by the US, the governments across the region sought to reform the old colonial social structures that had impoverished and marginalised their peoples. Raul Prebisch, director of ECLAC, and Solon Barraclough, an FAO associate, were among those who strongly supported the Alliance for Progress strategy, genuinely believing that it would help Latin America. They promoted some of the words in the 1961 Charter of Punta del Este which sealed the Alliance: "a view to replacing latifundia and dwarf holdings by an equitable system of land tenure... the land will become for the man who works it the basis of his economic stability, the foundation of his increasing welfare, and the guarantee of his freedom and dignity."⁶⁹

Colombia was, in the 1960s, already a recipient of US Food Aid, also acquiring wheat donations and purchases yearly at very low prices, and in 1961 became a beneficiary of the generous loans coming with the Alliance for Progress; and, as also discussed in Punta del Este, was supported by the US to advance the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) which would grant stability to the coffee prices favouring the main Colombian export product at the time.

All these decisions were taken behind desks or within big halls from afar, and it seems evident that their promoters acted with the best interest of Latin American peasantries in mind. The following chapters argue that some of these reforms had, however, the opposite effects at sub-regional level. The focus on food security as understood at the time, limited to availability and accessibility, detached food policies from agrarian policies. Therefore, it was already too late when the Colombian government realised that the national wheat production

⁶⁸ FAO, "FAO Reports to ECOSOC Preparation of 4th Report on Progress on Land Reform FA 5/5 1960-1965" (Misc., Rome, Italy, 1965 1960), FA 5/5, FAO Archives, Rome; FAO, "Progress in Land Reform" (New York, NY, USA: United Nations, 1966); Arthur L. Domike and Solon Barraclough, "La Estructura Agraria En Siete Países de América Latina," *Investigación Económica* 26, no. 103/104 (1966): 139–206; Solon Barraclough, *An End to Hunger? The Social Origins of Food Strategies* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA : Geneva: Zed Books : UNRISD : South Centre, 1991).

⁶⁹ The American Republics, "The Charter of Punta Del Este, Establishing an Alliance for Progress Within the Framework of Operation Pan America" (1961), pt. TITLE I Goal 6.

was collapsing in 1975. Regarding the Social and Agrarian reform (SAR), although some achievements were made in terms of land redistribution, they were insufficient. Because the substantive agrarian reform dreamed up by Barraclough and Prebisch also included credit, technical assistance and rural infrastructure, among other elements, some of the Alliance funds were used to push peasants into debt and plant non-peasant industrial crops, or to finance infrastructure mega-projects which displaced entire communities and transformed territories without any previous consultation with its inhabitants. This is not what ECLAC or FAO intended, but was what local institutions managed to do while facing a strong opposition by powerful *terratenientes*. Eventually, the agrarian elites, grouped in Federations, and their allies used their ideas of development and industrialisation to advance the Green Revolution and their anti-peasant agendas.

The Green Revolution, as described in the fourth chapter, was a product of the association between countries and philanthropic researchers guided by the ideas of rural developmentalism and a limited definition of food security used during the US Food Aid Regime. The conception of abandoning the resilient agro-diverse farming for high-yielding monocrops was locally welcomed by agrarian elites whose Federations already specialised in making money out of a single industrial agricultural product. Therefore, they were not only sponsoring the developments but also influencing policies of monopolisation of genetic resources and improved seeds. Federations increased their earnings according to quantity, therefore adoption of monocrop models, planting densification and higher yields were highly aligned with their interests and while the ICA and import substitution lasted, they enjoyed stable and reliable markets.

It can be affirmed that the international advisors, the government, and the agrarian elites actively wanted depeasantisation but under other names and in different ways. International experts such as Currie explicitly said that they should be transformed into city workers. ECLAC experts, on the other hand, although they wanted a peasantisation of rural areas, simultaneously fostered a rural development on 'their terms'. Very few people did as Fals-Borda and listened to what peasant populations actually had to say about it. As this thesis reviews, when the government finally determined to involve peasants in decision-making tables in 1970 in order to achieve not only democratisation of land but also of power, the *terratenientes* used their influence to impose a

developmentalist agenda again within the following two years. Subsequent governments aligned with *terratenedientes* declared that “our greatest problem is the smallholding” as a way to say, ‘our greatest problem is the peasant economy’.⁷⁰ Then, agrarian technology transfer for ‘modernisation’ and ‘higher yields’ became the agrarian reform’s priority over land redistribution and peasant wellbeing. The advantages of an Industrialisation by Import Substitution (ISI), also promoted by ECLAC to grant peasants a local market during the Cold War, were capitalised upon by the agrarian elites – the Federations – instead, who were in a way supported by the peasants who accepted being paternalistically embraced under their umbrella.

Food Security in the Territories of Study in the 1960s

This sub-section aims to present a synopsis of peasantries’ lifestyles in connection with food production in mid-century Colombia, right before agrarian reforms and counter-reforms transformed them. This aims to connect the so far highly theoretical discussion to the realities lived in the territories according to the peasants’ memories. It also seeks to humanise these conceptual discussions in a critically decolonial way, prioritising peasant perspectives and serving as foreword to support the methodological points. To offer this assessment of food security and food sovereignty in the 1960s, this chapter uses the most updated version of the food security framework, which includes aspects such as low dependency on cereal import and international food and agrochemicals’ prices. However, these aspects related to food sufficiency were not really part of the historical use of the food security concept, which initially in the 1970s involved only availability and accessibility and was rather used to justify Green Revolutions and depeasantising interventions.

In the 1960s rural Colombia, food and food production were the centre around which family and community culture was organised, therefore changing them implied changing peasants’ world(s). There is a whole body of knowledge dedicated to celebrating, studying and comprehending the links between food, culture, nature, and society, and its importance for personal development and

⁷⁰ Hernán Vallejo Mejía, *Memorias 1973-1974* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería - MADR, 1974), vi.

relationships.⁷¹ Food plays a central role in human life, which goes beyond just nutrition/health. In the case of these peasantries, their idea of ‘happiness’ is sentimentally relational to food and specifically their ‘own food’ (family farmed), hence they naturally reject other cuisines.⁷² Cooking among peasants is considered an act of ‘love’ and ‘care’, too, “otherwise the taste is awful” as a participant commented, and also peasant food was believed to be “always taster and healthier”.⁷³ Following this, it seems obvious – therefore surprisingly misunderstood and ignored – that food production, as a facet of land/Nature, is a fundamental aspect of the peasant ethos.

In the 1960s, Colombian peasants were food self-sufficient, with some exceptions in the coffee zone, and were either self-employed or worked in collaboration with family and neighbours, in special ‘societies’ or in ‘exchange arrangements’ with a landowner whom they called ‘patron’ without being employed by him, thereby securing relative labour stability and income. Some commonly used forms of labour agreements with the so-called ‘patrons’ were *aparcería* (sharecropping), mostly in the coffee zone, or *mediesqueros* in Santurbán and some parts of Los Montes de María. The *mediesqueros* were neighbours or tenants who worked in association with the landowners, who could be other peasants, and earned half of every production; this is still a custom.⁷⁴ These works were mostly seasonal and usually not full-time, so peasants still relied on their subsistence crops to feed themselves and the family. I include here the coffee *aparceros* and farm administrators, who usually

⁷¹ Gina M. Almerico, “Food and Identity: Food Studies, Cultural, and Personal Identity,” *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies* 8 (2014): 1–8; C. Fischler, “Food, Self and Identity,” *Social Science Information* 27, no. 2 (June 1, 1988): 275–92; M L Axelson, “The Impact of Culture on Food-Related Behavior,” *Annual Review of Nutrition* 6, no. 1 (July 1986): 345–63; Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, eds., *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 3rd ed (New York: Routledge, 2013); C. Fischler, “Food Habits, Social Change and the Nature/Culture Dilemma,” *Social Science Information* 19, no. 6 (December 1, 1980): 937–53.

⁷² *Memories of Participant No.58 Anonymous (Interview 41)*, Los Montes de María, Recording (Zambrano, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.32 Anonymous (Interview 25)*, Eje Cafetero, Recording (Quimbaya, Quindío, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.16 Anonymous (Interview 11)*, Eje Cafetero, Recording (Manizales, Quindío, Colombia, 2019).

⁷³ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 78, 79 (Collective Interview)*, Santurbán, Recording (Santodomingo de Silos, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.40 Julio Rodríguez (Interview 33)*, Los Montes de María, Recording (San Juan Nepomuceno, Bolívar, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.36 Anonymous (Interview 29)*, Eje Cafetero, Recording (La Tebaida, Quindío, Colombia, 2019).

⁷⁴ Renzo Ramírez Bacca, Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona, and Susana Ynés González Sawczuk, *Historia, trabajo, sociedad y cultura*, 1. ed, Ensayos Interdisciplinarios, vol. 1 (Medellín: Universidad Nacional de Colombia-Sede Medellín, Grupo de Investigación Historia, Trabajo, Sociedad y Cultura, 2008).

not only grew food for themselves but also to feed the workers. Therefore, almost self-sufficient, they still shared responsibility over the food security of others with the landowner. Coffee peasants who owned small farms were also in charge of feeding the people they employed, or in traditional labour exchange formats the plot owner, or more commonly his wife, served as host: many still do.⁷⁵

This meant that peasants' food security was determined by their food sovereignty capabilities. This was represented in two main aspects which, in some areas, have almost disappeared today: the *pancoger* or subsistence crops, and the natural surroundings that provided abundant wild meat and fruits. Native or creole food culture was based entirely on locally available, seasonal protein which was tied to regional life cycles.⁷⁶ Peasants in these three sub-regions were to a greater or lesser extent not only croppers, but also hunters and gatherers, and an important part of their diet was wild meat.⁷⁷

Pancoger, the first key element of self-sufficiency, varied regionally; while in the *paramo*, for instance, *criollo* wheat bread was common, in the coastal regions the *pancoger* were mainly based on tubers like *batata* (a species of sweet potato), *yucca* and *ñame* (a type of yam); also bananas, and plantain of different sizes, such as the small *pochocho*.⁷⁸ By contrast, in the Andes *pancogers* included maize, potatoes, onions, kidney beans, citron, *yucca*, *arracacha*, wheat, and barley, among others. Fruits like *cidra* or *guama*, the *mafafa* corms and the *chachafruto* beans were also common in the coffee zone,

⁷⁵ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 4, 5 (Collective Interview), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Neira, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.12 Foira Trejos (Interview 7), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.33 Anonymous (Interview 26), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Quimbaya, Quindío, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.37 Anonymous (Interview 30), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (La Tebaida, Quindío, Colombia, 2019).

⁷⁶ I distinguish between 'native' and '*criollo*': foods surviving from pre-Columbian times are 'native', and those resulting of the food miscegenation are '*criollos*'. In general, both are exchangeable in the peasant language with the more commonly used word 'ancestral'.

⁷⁷ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Neira, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.39 Alfonso Herrera Rivera (Interview 32), Los Montes de María*, Recording (San Juan Nepomuceno, Bolívar, 2019); *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.86 Anonymous (Interview 60), Santurbán*, Recording (Santodomingo de Silos, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).

⁷⁸ *Memories of Participant No.58; Memories of Participant No.39; Memories of Participant No.67 Anonymous (Interview 44), Los Montes de María*, Recording (El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.72 Catalina Pérez Pérez (Interview 49), Los Montes de María*, Recording (Sincedejo, Sucre, 2019).

but are almost extinct there today.⁷⁹ The combination of peasant ingredients granted a rich local cuisine that was – and is – important not only for peasants' but for Colombians' identity. The wheat and/or maize *arepa* (a kind of flatbread), an adaptation from an indigenous recipe, is a good example of a peasant-originated national dish. Other rural meals had Spanish-mixed origins, such as the Santurbán wheat-based *amasijos* (bakery goods) which were essential to the daily intake.⁸⁰ Only a few wise women of certain families had the responsibility of preserving and keeping the secret of the *amasijos* preparation; they are called '*guardianas de recetas*' (guardians or custodians of recipes).⁸¹

The *pancoger* plots were based on what peasants call 'natural' food. Seeds were shared freely, and although stored rudimentarily, pests did not appear to be severe.⁸² Food stocks were well preserved and accordingly lasted longer, to better cope with the 'hunger months' in sites where inter-harvest periods made production difficult.⁸³ The word 'natural' is frequently used to talk about agriculture before the Green Revolution, which is the subject of Chapter 4. What they now call 'poison' – agrochemicals – were unknown or minimally applied because 'very little was needed'.⁸⁴ Equally, dependence on foreign inputs was minimal – "We only bought the salt"; everything else was available on the farm.⁸⁵ *Pancoger* were in every backyard, along with medicinal plants.⁸⁶

The second element of peasants' food security at the time is highly controversial, as it invites us to think about possibly unsustainable practices

⁷⁹ *Memories of Participant No.3 Anonymous (Interview 3), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Neira, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.7 Anonymous (Interview 12), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participant No.83; Memories of Participant No.85 Anonymous (Interview 59), Santurbán, Recording (Mutiscua, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).*

⁸⁰ See for example: Dumar E. Vargas Rivera and Fabián Guerrero C., *Silos, saberes y sabores. inventario gastronómico* (Santo Domingo de Silos, Colombia: Alcaldía de Santo Domingo de Silos, 2016); Mora Delgado et al., *A qué sabe el norte*.

⁸¹ This is a field observation, with some peasants referring to rural women who knew local recipes as "*guardianas de recetas*" which means guardians or custodians. Mora Delgado et al refer to them as 'woman heirs of the recipes'. See Mora Delgado et al., *A qué sabe el norte*.

⁸² *Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.72 Catalina Pérez Pérez (Interview 49), Los Montes de María, Recording (Sincelejo, Sucre, 2019); Memories of Participant No.83; Memories of Participant No.84 Anonymous (Interview 58), Santurbán, Recording (Santo Domingo de Silos, Colombia, 2019).*

⁸³ *Memories of Participant No.91 Anonymous (Interview 65), Santurbán, Recording (Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia, 2019).*

⁸⁴ *Memories of Participant No.83.*

⁸⁵ *Memories of Participant No.67 Anonymous (Interview 44), Los Montes de María, Recording (El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participant No.72.*

⁸⁶ *Memories of Participant No.67; Memories of Participant No.72.*

amongst peasantries: wild meat. Whether these are nutritious or ethical has been subject of much debate, but, regardless, their consumption was viewed by peasants as being within the balance of health, life and autonomy, and in harmony with their environment. It was common to the three territories. To give examples from Los Montes de María, in Caribbean *ciénagas y montes* (swamps and wilderness) activities such as fishing and hunting were essential for the diet. The swamps provided a splendid edible biodiversity: native fish such as *bocachicos*, *mocholos*, *mojarras*, and *cacuchos*, small alligators like *iguanas* and *babillas*, as well as small mammals such as deers, *guartinajas*, *ñeques*, armadillos, *tigrillos* (small tiger-like animal) and monkeys.⁸⁷ Baptiste et al. affirmed “the use of wildlife as a food source ha[d] a strong territorial identity”⁸⁸ Wild meat was considered ‘uncontaminated’, and therefore healthier, and peasants varied and limited their intake frequency to maintain population numbers.⁸⁹ Such practices have however massively reduced during the past decades due to state interventions which, as will be seen, forced peasantries to find other sources of protein or to suffer a protein deficiency which is highly problematic for elderly and children’s health.⁹⁰

Moving to other food-related aspects of the peasant lifestyle, it is fundamental to mention activities of social cohesion. As explained, being part of a community is one of the qualities which characterises peasantries in CAS theory. In 1960s Colombia, food was central for community building activities such as the Santurbán wheat harvest feasts, the seasonal candy festivals in the Coffee Zone, and the community plots and sung communications about farming in Los Montes de María.

Wheat threshing in Santurbán used to be performed biennially with celebrations called *las fiestas de la trilla* – communal wheat threshing parties

⁸⁷ Orlando Fals Borda, *Resistencia en el San Jorge* (Bogotá: C. Valencia, 1984); María Piedad Baptiste, Carlos A Lasso, and Clara L Matallana, *Carne de monte y seguridad alimentaria: bases técnicas para una gestión integral en Colombia*, 2012; Klaudia Cárdenas Botero and Cristina Consuegra, *Historias junto al fogón* (Colombia: Programa Paisajes de Conservación de USAID, Ministerio de Cultura y Fondo para la Biodiversidad y Áreas Protegidas, 2015).

⁸⁸ Baptiste, Lasso, and Matallana, *Carne de monte y seguridad alimentaria*, 6.

⁸⁹ Ibid; Germán I. Andrade-Pérez et al., *Transiciones socioecológicas hacia la sostenibilidad: Gestión de la biodiversidad en los procesos de cambio de uso de la tierra en el territorio colombiano* (Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2018).

⁹⁰ René Rizzoli et al., “Protein Intake and Bone Disorders in the Elderly,” *Joint Bone Spine* 68, no. 5 (October 2001): 383–92; Bhoomika R. Kar, Shobini L. Rao, and B. A. Chandramouli, “Cognitive Development in Children with Chronic Protein Energy Malnutrition,” *Behavioral and Brain Functions* 4, no. 1 (July 24, 2008): 31.

hosted by every farm at harvest.⁹¹ “On the shoulder or back they bring the sheaves of wheat to the *ramada*, where the threshing party will be celebrated”, narrated the local historian Cabeza-Quiñones (see image 4).⁹² The wheat was then left to dry while waiting for a turn with the threshing machine.⁹³ The festivities started the day before the threshing, with generous meals and drinks, and during the threshing all neighbours and friends came with their families to help without any payment other than the chance to participate.⁹⁴ Children played in the bran piles until night, when everybody enjoyed the dances and party. The feast then moved with the threshing machine to the next farm and so on until all the sacks were ready to go to the provincial mills.⁹⁵



Image 4. Photograph 'Wheat reapers' by Don Trino Antonio Villamizar, ca. 1985.

Seasons of fruit-based sweets are another example from the coffee zone. They were connected with kids 'games', meant to accompany group activities which built relationships through playing. Being so agrodiverse in

⁹¹ These testimonies are confirmed by the original 'Golden Book of Silos' kept in the Municipal House of Culture and extensive photographic archive. "El Libro de Oro de Silos."

⁹² Cabeza Quiñones, *Silos, así queremos verte*, 38.

⁹³ *Memories of Participant No.80* Trino Antonio Villamizar (Interview 55), Santurbán, Recording (Santo Domingo de Silos, Colombia, 2019).

⁹⁴ *Memories of Participant No.80; Memories of Participant No.83; Memories of Participant No.97* Anonymous (Interview 71), Santurbán, Recording (Chitagá, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).

⁹⁵ Cabeza Quiñones, *Silos, así queremos verte*.

fruits, hundreds of different seasonal candies were made, usually prepared and combined with *panela* (concentrated sugar cane).⁹⁶

Other examples of the connection to seasonal rhythms come from the music and dances, which in Los Montes de María were related to farming tasks. *Zafra* songs were for cropping, there was a different rhythm to clean wild areas for new plots, or 'the rooster's song' to identify "who passed [the plot work's shift to] each other".⁹⁷ Some peasant dances reflected both the domestic tasks related to cooking and also the agricultural chores.⁹⁸

Sharing was and is also an important aspect of food culture for the peasantries visited. Traditionally in these territories, both labour exchange and food trade did not involve money. These were traded organically, particularly if there was a labour division – for example, fisherman changing fish for yam and yucca.⁹⁹ In some families, meals were prepared in abundance, in anticipation of more people arriving. Sometimes peasants received strangers, even offering them food without expecting anything in return – just out of the goodness of their heart, as I witnessed.

My last reflection on the state of peasants' food sovereignty and food security in the 1960s challenges the 'bucolic narrative' often recalled by peasants. As seen, peasants refer to old times of food self-sufficiency as 'a paradise' where they lived in harmony, with no individualism, eating tastier, healthier and cleaner, and when they were in general, happy.¹⁰⁰ However, to what extent are peasants' positive memories a nostalgic framing against present day instability and insecurity, and what are the hidden alternative visions? Some of the interviewees revealed that the food sovereignty enjoyed at that time had significant gaps. As this thesis demonstrates further, these memories are heavily shaped by current situations of food insecurity, environmental injustices and threats to the peasants' permanence in the territories, which make them perceive that past as a golden era.

⁹⁶ *Memories of Participant No. 13 Nestor Fabio Jaramillo (Interview 8), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Nerira, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).*

⁹⁷ *Memories of Participant No.68 Manuel Agustín Cortecero (Interview 45), Los Montes de María, Recording (María La Baja, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).*

⁹⁸ *Memories of Participant No.19 Anonymous (Interview 14), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Villa María, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).*

⁹⁹ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 59, 60, 61, 62, 63 (Collective Interview), Los Montes de María, Recording (San Juan de Nepomuceno, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).*

¹⁰⁰ *Memories of Participant No.67.*

The gender injustice within these peasant communities and the rural society, which is further studied in detail in Chapter 3, could be highly evidenced in the 1960s when peasant women's shoulders bore all the burden of feeding responsibilities and culinary knowledge preserving. When it comes to dozens of workers, as in some coffee farms during the harvests, these unpaid feeding responsibilities went and still go unrecognised as women's contribution to the coffee economy.¹⁰¹ Testimonies provided, although nuanced by nostalgia, also evidence both periods of shortage in the *páramo* and seasonal nutritional imbalances in all cases.¹⁰² Some interviews reflect that peasantries held an unbalanced diet with low or no consumption of vegetables and greens, which suggests a level of food insecurity.¹⁰³ Additionally, the lack of participatory rights at the time and tenancy instability meant that both food security and food sovereignty were unstable and unsustainable.

This thesis demonstrates in the following chapters however that subsequent reforms and counter-reforms of a 'liberal nature' also failed to improve these deficiencies. On the contrary, they have intensified them and created new problems by breaking the agri-food cultural element tied to social tissue, self-sufficiency and the autonomy. As such, this thesis evidences that counter-reforms in Colombia from 1961 to 2013 have caused depeasantisation, created peasant food dependency while undermining food sovereignty, and contributed to the environmental damages of the landscapes studied.

¹⁰¹ *Memories of Participants No. 4, 5 (Collective Interview)*; *Memories of Participants No. 4, 5 (Collective Interview)*; *Memories of Participant No.33*; *Memories of Participant No.37*; Ramírez Bacca, "Women in Colombian Traditional Coffee Growing, 1910-1970"; Janet M. Conway, "When Food Becomes a Feminist Issue: Popular Feminism and Subaltern Agency in the World March of Women," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 188–203.

¹⁰² *Memories of Participant No.77 Anonymous (Interview 53)*, 2019, Santurbán, Recording (Santodomingo de Silos, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.91 Anonymous (Interview 66)*, Santurbán, Recording (Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia, 2019).

¹⁰³ *Memories of Participant No.16*; *Memories of Participant No.32*.

CHAPTER 2. 'The Swamp, the Mill and the Underwater Parish'

Developmentalist Top-down Reformism in 1960s Colombia

The 1960s, for Colombia, were a decade of key institutional reforms and 'rebirth of the Republic'.¹ Peasants were still recovering from '*La Violencia*'. While many migrated to towns and cities, others – despite logistical difficulties, remaining risk of conflict, and heavy agricultural labour – remained on their lands often without property titles, preserving their traditional diverse agri-food culture, which they depended on. During this decade, they faced unexpected interventions from developmentalist programs. By 'developmentalism' I refer to the notion coming from Truman's 'Point Four Programme' policy that characterised some countries as 'underdeveloped' requiring help in order to follow the western 'modernisation' growth model.² These ideas were resolutely executed by President Kennedy after 1961 and capitalised upon by the National Front governments in Colombia to provide internal legitimacy to their 'second Republic'.

The Alliance for Progress, announced by President Kennedy in his inaugural speech in 1961, was presented as a special pledge offered to "free men and free governments", their "loyal friends" during the Cold War.³ Similarly, the Food for Peace Act PL-480, which authorised the government of the US to perform concessional sales or donations, was aimed at "friendly nations"⁴. 1961 was a key year for this global reformist wave: the signing of the Alliance for

¹ Karl, *Forgotten Peace*.

² José María Tortosa, "Maldevelopment," in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, ed. Ashish Kothari et al. (New Delhi: Tulika Books and Authorsupfront, 2019), 9–11.

³ *President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address*, YouTube OL Video (Washington D.C., 1961); CIA, "Nature and Purpose of Alliance for Progress - Congressional Record" (CREST, Washington D.C., September 16, 1965), (FOIA) /ESDN (CREST): CIA-RDP88-01315R000400130011-5, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room.

⁴ U.S. Const., "§068. Pub. L. 083–480 – Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954," Pub. L. No. Pub. 83-480, § 68 Stat. 454 (Chapter 469), 454 (1954); Dechert LLP, "A Summary of U.S. Foreign Assistance Legislation" (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Dechert LLP, December 2008), Oxfam America, oxfamamerica.org.

Progress and the US commitment to the International Coffee Agreement were both confirmed in Punta del Este, Uruguay; President Kennedy reorganised the international aid law through the Foreign Assistance Act which created the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and the food assistance branch of the UN – the WFP (World Food Programme) – was created, which globalised and facilitated logistically and politically the completion of the US initiative.⁵ Internally, it was also the year the Social Agrarian Reform (SAR) was launched. The SAR projects were designed as part of the Alliance for Progress as a Cold War strategy after three substantial agrarian reforms, driven by major peasant revolutions in Latin America: Mexican, Bolivian and Cuban.⁶ The scientists from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) saw in this an opportunity for social justice, a real and concrete chance for rural development – in western terms – of poor Colombian and Latin American peasants. Therefore, ECLAC researchers led by Solon Barraclough gave support to the Punta del Este Declaration which established the Alliance, and shaped point six on agrarian reform in this agreement accordingly.⁷ Emerging from '*La Violencia*' and dictatorship, Colombian National Front governments found these American aid initiatives, which were created to fight communism, provided the perfect circumstances to legitimise their authority in the 'Second Republic'.

This chapter explores the peasantries' experiences in the three sub-regions of study to exemplify through microhistories how some of those top-down decisions and policies, adopted in the agri-food sector and imposed on the territories without consulting rural inhabitants, unleashed landscape transformations that were disconnected from local realities of food security and ecosystemic equilibriums. These effects had both positive and negative impacts on food security and food sovereignty in Los Montes de María and its neighbouring communities, the Santurbán highlands, and the Coffee Axis. 'The

⁵ Randy Schnepf, "U.S. International Food Aid Programs: Background and Issues," Congressional Research Service CRS Report (Washington D.C.: CRS - Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress, September 14, 2016), Federation of American Scientists FAS, fas.org.

⁶ Arthur L. Domike and Solon Barraclough, "La estructura agraria en siete países de América Latina," *Investigación Económica* 26, no. 103/104 (1966): 139–206.

⁷ The American Republics, The Charter of Punta del Este, Establishing an Alliance for Progress Within the Framework of Operation Pan America; Cristóbal Kay, "Solon L. Barraclough: Leading Agrarian Reform Researcher and Advocate: 'Legacies: Solon L. Barraclough,'" *Development and Change* 37, no. 6 (November 2006): 1389–1402.

Swamp, the Mill and the Underwater Parish' were real, cultural and territorial components of these peasant landscapes impacted by top-down decisions taken by the Colombian government in the 1960s, but also allegorically stand in representation of socio-ecosystems, nutrition and natural/agrarian resources. The agrarian reform implemented within the US-led Alliance for Progress framework, and food aid through the Coffee Pact and cereal imports implemented following the American Public Law 480, originated from northern hemisphere initiatives. As a state with extensive colonial baggage, Colombia was fertile ground to implement these American policies of financial or social assistance. Therefore, American aid schemes were facilitated and executed through colonial institutions, which translated in the field into drastic landscape transformations bringing significant changes in the foundation of peasant life: food.⁸

The Mill, the Swamp and the Underwater Parish were natural and cultural elements of the 1960s peasant economy in two of the three case studies. At the same time, they are representative symbols of not only peasant food sovereignty, but also of what they see as ancestral culture and territorial roots. Wheat mills were by mid-century the centre of rural life in the cold lands of Santurbán; the town Santo Domingo de Silos (Silos hereinafter, to which it is customarily abbreviated) still proclaims it was 'Once the Wheat Capital of North-eastern Colombia'.⁹ They were located around the *páramo* in towns such as Mutiscua, Málaga, Pamplona, and Bucaramanga City.¹⁰ The underwater parish, meanwhile, actually represents two towns, 'Palo Alto Hicotea' and 'Nomeembromes' (which translate as 'High Bole Turtle' and 'Donotmesswithme' respectively), which were gradually flooded in their entirety between 1964 and 1967, with their church, their school and their graveyard, to build the Marialabaja Water District in Los Montes de María. The reservoirs created by this project, El Playón and Matuya, literally cover local peasants' parents and grandparents' remains.¹¹ Nearby in the Lower Sinú river, the

⁸ Scholars of the decolonial turn and the Latin American postcolonial studies, agree on the fact that some peoples after independence suffered a reconfiguration of powers and forces of oppression that perpetuated colonialism internally, adopting as a legacy, its patriarchalism, classism, racism and centralism. See: Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa*, 2010; Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America"; Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*.

⁹ "El libro de oro de Silos"; Cabeza Quiñones, *Silos, así queremos verte*.

¹⁰ *Memories of Participant No.85*.

¹¹ *Memories of Participant No.39; Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

opposite occurred. The swamp *Ciénaga El Cerrito*, inhabited by peasants displaced from the savannahs, was drained and dried in order to obtain new flat lands to extend the agrarian frontier. Finally, at the same time but in contrast with these cases, the coffee zone was on the cusp of a new era of prosperity coming with the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), signed in 1962.

This chapter discusses through three substantive sections reviewing the agrarian reforms coming with the Alliance for Progress aid programme, from the point of view of the participants' environmental living memories.

This chapter tackles the following question: from the peasant landscape perspective, how did interventions made by the US and Colombian governments in the 1960s to agri-food systems modify the flow of staples and natural resources and, by extension, contribute to creating food insecurity in some communities and improving food security in others, permanently transforming peasantry wellbeing and soil and water use in the regions herein studied? The evidence presented will show that both temporary benefits and counter-reformist affectations such as depeasantisation, displacement, food insecurity and drastic landscape and ecosystemic transformations were driven by international and national agrarian policies decided 'behind the desk' and imposed paternalistically upon the peasant territories. On one hand, the ICA facilitated an excellent collection of parafiscal export taxes which the coffee growers' Federation FEDECAFÉ used to positively impact on rural food security indicators such as those related to water resources, commercial routes and infrastructure for the Coffee Axis. On the other hand, however, I argue that the vertical imposition of rural development decisions also had adverse effects on the practice, causing deep changes in the soil use and loss of food diversity and food self-sufficiency, in some cases creating dependency. These transformations intersected processes of forced territorial reconfiguration with depeasantisation and dispossession.

'17 de mogolla y 7 de afrecho' (17 of bran, 7 of husk):

The Arrival of American Wheat

"... They usually got out about 65 sacks of flour a day, and about 17 or 18 of bran they called it, and about 7 of ground husks, and one or two of grain. That

was the grinding. And the national wheat yield was not that much, around 50 [flour sacks], and about 25 of bran, it had a lot of husk and bran”¹²

Evaristo Blanco and Rafael Guerrero brought the first wheat mill to Silos in the 1900s, carried in pieces on mules through the Caraba River, whose name the mill adopted – Caraba Mill.¹³ Mills such as Caraba were installed in the *páramo* at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the Bautista brothers' Vichagá or the mills of Herrán in Mutiscua. The department of Santander participated fully in the *fomento triguero* (wheat campaign), with the regional magazine ‘*Vida Campesina*’ which claimed in 1941 "You have to sow more wheat!"¹⁴ By the time that the Social and Agrarian Reform went nationwide in 1962, Silos was producing 30 to 50 daily bulks (about 40 kilograms per sack) of wheat and flour to be dispatched to Bucaramanga City, and so it became known as the western Colombian wheat capital.¹⁵

Wheat in Colombia, and Northern Santander specifically, presented multiple advantages to advance food sovereignty: it was available in agrodiverse varieties, was highly resistant to yellow rust, cooperative with other crops, low in agrochemicals, generated stable employment, and became an element of social cohesion and the base of a diverse food culture. Wheat in Santurbán towns generated multiple economic and social dividends with jobs for millers, operators, growers, accountants, packers, dispatchers, transporters and vendors. In other words, food availability and accessibility, two main components of food security, were guaranteed thanks to this production chain. In addition, along with ancestral indigenous Andean crops, wheat gained local cultural acceptance and became a fundamental part of the traditional diet facilitating the establishment of local food security and food sovereignty: the *paramuno* peasants from Santurbán idealised their traditional cuisine and came to revere the lands that they cultivated, romanticising the production and consumption of wheat.

¹² *Memories of Participant No.85.*

¹³ Laura Katherine Capacho Jaimes and Trino Antonio Villamizar, *Silos, proyecto de fotografía y memoria* (Santo Domingo de Silos, Colombia: Biblioteca José J. Rico Villamizar, 2017).

¹⁴ Ceferino González, “Vida Campesina No.1” (Magazine - Organo oficial de la secretaría de agricultura e industrias del departamento de Santander, Bucaramanga, Colombia, September 1941), 28, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Hemeroteca Nacional, Bogotá.

¹⁵ Capacho Jaimes and Villamizar, *Silos, proyecto de fotografía y memoria.*

The local historian Cabeza-Quiñones' writing is loaded with romance around the wheat culture he remembers from his childhood memories:

In the last months of the old year and the first of the new, when the confident and optimistic peasant sees his wheat in season, with a spirit of camaraderie he invites his relatives and neighbours to begin the harvest, in which the feminine sex also takes an active part, a commission of industrious, robust women, dressed in bright colours, smelling sublime, their bodies evoking fertility, playing to excite the young men, who obediently and willingly assist with their own sickles to cut the golden spikes.¹⁶

“*Es el trigo para Silos lo que el Café para Colombia*” - wheat meant as much for Silos as coffee means for Colombia, he wrote.¹⁷

However, the romantic and nostalgic memories of *Silero* peasants around the hard labour in harvest and the *trilla* festivals contrast with the complications of marketing and commercialisation of wheat after American imports started, which grew worse with time. The peasant economy market in Colombia has been mostly informal. Even today, it is characterised by oral agreements and/or direct negotiation made without any preparation or planning but done last minute whenever crops ripen and the harvest is ready for commerce. In other words, there are no purchase promises, nor any supply deadlines to be committed to. In the 'wheat times' in Santurbán, for instance, the threshed wheat sales roughly followed this procedure: peasants would visit the mill when the wheat was fully threshed and ready but before it was packed and transported. This meant double transportation, from the farm to the town centre – probably on mule – and from there to the town where the mill was, likely costing a bus or car ticket. This first visit aimed to inform the mill that there was a wheat load ready and to ask if they would receive it. If the mill accepted, they would require the farmer to bring a wheat sample. So, the farmer had to make a second trip, this time by appointment. The sample was '*punteada*'; that is to say it was given a quality rating, according to which the mill determined how much wheat could be accepted. The farmer then had to make a third trip, transporting the agreed wheat load to be delivered for processing. Usually, the payment required one or more trips to the mill. This procedure could easily take

¹⁶ Cabeza Quiñones, *Silos, así queremos verte*, 28.

¹⁷ Cabeza Quiñones, 27.

an entire week, making a journey to the mill every day.¹⁸ This extemporary and protracted procedure worsened when they were told that they should compete from then on with foreign wheat.

Paramuno peasant memories do not specify when exactly the American wheat started to arrive. The archives show, however, that public purchases started in the 1950s and the total imports, public and private, exceeded the national production by the mid-1960s. Over time, peasants began to notice how their wheat became less acceptable to millers, with some even having whole harvests rejected. The general comment was that imported foreign wheat had reached the mill. Each time more and more of those multiple trips were made in vain. Logically, the peasants got tired of such a disadvantageous situation and started to gradually reduce their wheat plots and extend other crops, always however keeping their *pancoger* subsistence crops for domestic consumption.

The impact of cereal imports on food security was therefore limited; the change was not abrupt or shocking, but gradual, uneven, almost imperceptible, taking decades. The ruin of the wheat flour industry began with the farms; the mills were still working then, they never thought that rejecting local production would have consequences for their own survival, as will be shown below. They simply took advantage of the infrastructure and logistics operation generated for public purchases to make private purchases of a wheat that they thought was of better quality. The rejected peasant wheat, well adapted and resistant to pathogens in this sub-region, was replaced by foreign wheat acquired through American companies that proved to be less suited to local conditions. One such company, Cargill, was working in the 1960s with the Colombian National Institute of Supply INA (later called IDEMA, Agricultural Marketing Institute) as broker in charge of import operations coming with the US Public Law PL-480 called initially 'Food for Peace Act'.¹⁹

Why did the US dump their cheap surplus wheat in a country with a healthy local production? After the post-war recession in Europe had abated,

¹⁸ *Memories of Participant No.85.*

¹⁹ According to Brewster Kneen, through the door opened by PL-480, companies like Cargill were able to approach private mills directly, in Colombia as in other parts of the world such as Senegal, Burkina Faso and Taiwan. See: "Cargill in Colombia | Cargill," accessed September 4, 2019, <https://www.cargill.com/worldwide/colombia-en>; Brewster Kneen, *Invisible Giant: Cargill and Its Transnational Strategies*, 2nd ed. (Pluto Press, 2015); John Abdulla, "Divide and Purchase: How Land Ownership Is Being Concentrated in Colombia," Research report (Colombia: Oxfam Colombia, September 27, 2013).

the US was no longer compelled to send aid there to compensate for food shortages. Their grain surplus – both public and private – was stockpiling, and they had an availability of resources to provide help to other nations. By then, the Cold War was penetrating the Americas, and the Cuban Revolution brought an agrarian reform with a comprehensive land redistribution, an example that could be easily followed by oppressed and marginalised Latin American peasants in other countries.²⁰ Food aid was a formula to stop (communist) revolution igniting. The Food for Peace Act was both a way to immediately satisfy hunger wherever such poverty was extreme, and a means to share – or more accurately to get rid of – cereal surplus.²¹ This aid was subject to the discretion of friendly governments which requested it, not only from Latin America but worldwide. Some contemporary scholars not only underestimated the potential effects of introducing cheap staples by donation or sale on credit in the labelled ‘underdeveloped’ countries, but enthusiastically recommended it.²²

²⁰ Solon Barraclough, “The Legacy of Latin American Land Reform,” *NACLA Report on the Americas* 28, no. 3 (November 1994): 16–21.

²¹ As it can be read in the same text of the law: U.S. Const., §068. Pub. L. 083–480 – Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954.

²² Deena R. Khatkhate, “Some Notes on the Real Effects of Foreign Surplus Disposal in Underdeveloped Economies,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 76, no. 2 (May 1962): 186; Theodore W. Schultz, “Value of U.S. Farm Surpluses to Underdeveloped Countries,” *Journal of Farm Economics* 42, no. 5 (December 1960): 1019; Franklin M. Fisher, “A Theoretical Analysis of the Impact of Food Surplus Disposal on Agricultural Production in Recipient Countries,” *Journal of Farm Economics* 45, no. 4 (November 1963): 863; Theodore J. Goering, “Public Law 480 in Colombia,” *Journal of Farm Economics* 44, no. 4 (November 1962): 992.

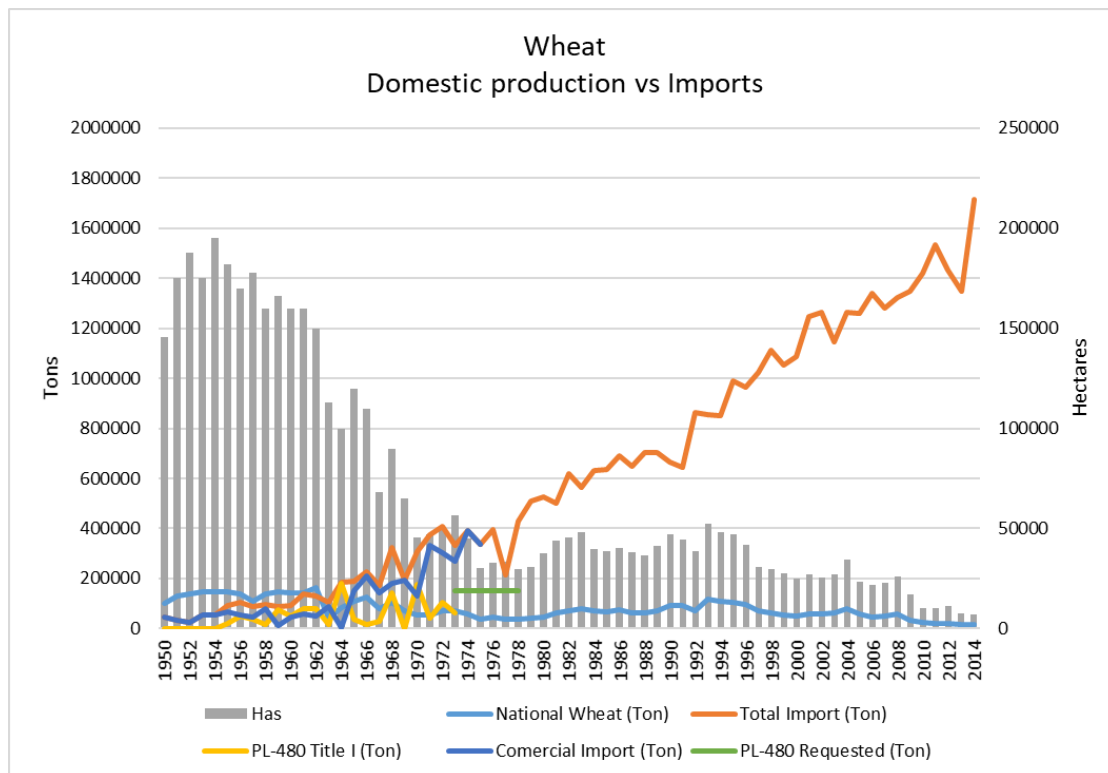


Figure 10. Domestic production vs imports of wheat in Colombia
Sources: FENALCE, CIDOS, Hall, Wikileaks.²³

Figure 10 above provides a framework of reference to illuminate the increasing ruin of Colombian wheat varieties. Wheat was the first crop subject to seed improvement research in the country, as in many others in the 1950s, when the first American 'campaigners' were sent "to carry the gospel of scientific agriculture to Colombia", a Green Revolution narrative that will be explored fully in the fourth chapter.²⁴ Thus, in the 1950s while the US was

²³ Fenalce, "Indicadores cerealistas," Departamento Económico Fenalce (Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de cereales y Leguminosas FENALDE, 2015), Finagro; Centro de Investigación y Documentación Social (CIDOS), *PAN y DRI: nueva forma de agresión imperialista* (Bogotá, Colombia: Editora viento del pueblo, 1979); Lana Hall, "The Effects of P.L. 480 Wheat Imports on Latin American Countries" (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University, 1980); "PL-480 Title I" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, November 15, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "PL-480 Title I" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, December 6, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "PL-480 Title I" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, December 11, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "PL-480 Title I FY 1973 Agreement" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, April 24, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "Proposed PL-480 Title I FY 1973 Agreement" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, April 4, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; Colombia, "PL480 Title 1" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, February 14, 1975), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "Colombia's PL-480 Request for FY 1974" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, July 20, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org; "Colombian FY74 PL480 Request" (Telegrams, Bogotá, Colombia, July 14, 1973), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org.

²⁴ E. C. Stakman, Richard Bradfield, and Paul C. Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger* (Harvard University Press, 1967), 217.

sending experts to improve global wheat yields using thousands of local varieties from the Global South, the PL-480 was sending cheap American wheat to those same countries, Colombia included. The grey bars in the graph show the number of hectares cultivated each year in Colombia, evidencing the constant growth in the productivity per hectare achieved by the *fomento trigoero* campaigns and research during the 1950s which continued until the 1960s when the local production was overrun by imports. The yellow line indicates that before 1963 imports used the public channel: the US-Colombia PL-480 agreements either paid in local money, by credit in dollars or received as donations for organisations such as Caritas Care.²⁵ There is an argument that these donations through nutritional programs based on wheat artificially increased the demand in the 1950s.²⁶ The National Institute of Agriculture INA also bought wheat out of the PL-480 accord, notably in 1962 when the local demand was overestimated, as the Ministry's report shows, causing excessive imports.²⁷ In 1962 one of the improved varieties which had already been widely distributed during the previous three years across the country failed against a "previously unknown race of yellow rust".²⁸ Imports, therefore, became increasingly abundant over a decade, as the orange line reveals. The reasons pleaded by successive Colombian governments, who kept requesting the American wheat yearly, was to hold the domestic price to restrain inflation.²⁹ The green line confirms new large PL-480 requests made by Colombia to the US in the early 1970s.³⁰ It took Colombia until 1975 to realise that this was a flawed policy and discontinue the public purchases recognising that "this subsidy discouraged the internal production and drove great import volumes".³¹ However, Colombian wheat's downward spiral was already in motion, with the number of cultivated hectares dramatically shrinking to one tenth of the level a decade previously.

²⁵ Colombia, "FFP PL 480 Title II Third Call Forward FY-78 CARE" (TE - Telegram (cable), Bogotá, Colombia, January 25, 1978), wikileaks.org/plusd/cables, wikileaks.org.

²⁶ Machado Cartagena, "El problema alimentario en Colombia [1986]"; Centro de Investigación y Documentación Social (CIDOS), *PAN y DRI: nueva forma de agresión imperialista*.

²⁷ Hernán Toro Agudelo, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1962* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1963).

²⁸ Toro Agudelo; Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*, 222.

²⁹ "Colombian FY74 PL480 Request," para. 1.

³⁰ Colombia, "PL480 Title 1"; Colombia, "FFP PL 480 Title II Third Call Forward FY-78 CARE."

³¹ Rafael Pardo Buelvas, *Memorias 1974-1975* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería - MADR, 1975), 10.

The graph shows eloquently how the state introduction of foreign wheat stimulated private purchases – mostly by the mills – and to the same extent national production was slowly forced to fall, although there was a period of stable production after the Institute of Agrarian Market IDEMA (former INA) ceased the public purchases and until the open market reforms in the 1990s. The imports line, however, continued rising, and the national production descended to almost zero. Colombian wheat varieties were, and still are, disappearing.

It is also interesting to note that in the 1970s, not only governments but also corporations contributed to the irregular alteration of the wheat trade balance. The so-called ‘great grain robbery’ abnormally increased wheat prices worldwide, apparently due to big private sales mainly to the USSR.³² Local producers campaigned in the press, the Colombian government competed vigorously with other countries for cheap US wheat to alleviate supposed domestic shortfalls.³³ Cargill took part in the Soviet acquisition movement.³⁴ Subsequently, it emerged as a major market winner forming a global food empire; yet it maintained a discreet presence in Colombia until its involvement in a scandal of illegal land acquisitions in 2013.³⁵

Back in 1960s Santurbán, the nuances of the above described process of wheat purchases seemed completely unknown to the peasants interviewed, some of whom worked for the same mill companies. In the territory, they merely noticed that local wheat varieties available in the sub-region started to be perceived as ‘brown’ or ‘whole-grain’ and less refined, and that whiter flour could be obtained in greater quantities from the American wheat.

...a sack of American wheat only made at most [never more than] an arroba [50 kilograms] of bran and husk together, while from the national wheat that was 62 kilograms. Half of bran and husk came out, and the other half was flour. Less flour yield [local]. The other [American] was superior to that.³⁶

³² “Cargill Foresees New Grain Era,” *Business Week Magazine*, April 11, 1979, CIA-RDP90-00806R000100200011-6, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room; Gerald Egger, “A Few Clannish, Multinational Grain Dealers Control World’s Basic Foods,” *The Pittsburgh Press*, August 5, 1979, CIA-RDP88-01350R000200030018-2, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room; Dan Morgan, “The Shadowy World of Grain Trade” (CREST, Washington D.C., June 10, 1979), CIA-RDP90-00806R000100200010-7, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room.

³³ “Colombia’s PL-480 Request for FY 1974,” 74.

³⁴ Kneen, *Invisible Giant*, “Cargill in Colombia | Cargill.”

³⁵ Abdulla, “Divide and Purchase: How Land Ownership Is Being Concentrated in Colombia.”

³⁶ *Memories of Participant No.83*.

Hence, the market preference changed gradually, and the Santurbán mills bought less and less locally produced wheat. One by one, local wheat growers migrated to other crops. Out of the new varieties developed by the wheat 'Green Revolution' campaign, *paramuno* peasants only remembered using *bonza*, and instead they mention using their local highland varieties which displayed no major diseases, such as *bola* and *motilón*.³⁷ All these heirloom seeds were lost.³⁸ Many wheat fields transformed into grasslands and the golden landscape of Silos, Mutiscua and its surroundings began to change. The harvest parties ceased, as did the neighbourly labour exchanges, and the peasantry's social relations and culture became as cold as the moor.

The mills did not last much longer. It seems clear by reading Cabeza Quiñones that mills were built in these towns because wheat was produced nearby, and it was logistically efficient to be placed close to multiple producers and consolidate the flour to be sent to neighbouring cities such as Bucaramanga or Cúcuta. However, the imported cereal used to enter the country through the customs service in the pacific port of Buenaventura in the southwest, so the American wheat made a long road trip crossing the whole country to arrive to the small towns in the Northeast to be ground which was highly inefficient. According to the participant testimonies, a much bigger mill was built in the city of Bucaramanga and the countryside mills fell into disuse.³⁹ That is how, by rejecting the local production, the smaller Santurbán rural mills 'dug their own grave'.

The countryside mills were initially handed over to their own workers and subsequently inherited by their relatives.⁴⁰ The mills of Herrán in Pamplona and Mutiscua are now abandoned, and neither their owners nor the local administrations have funds to keep these striking vestiges of the region's glorious wheat past running, as I witnessed during my visit (See image 5). The Santurbán peasantries still care deeply about them and show them respect, love and nostalgia, much as one might a deteriorated family photo. Since the hills are now covered by grass or other crops, the mills' remains are the only

³⁷ *Memories of Participant No.76 Anonymous (Interview 52), Santurbán, Recording (Mutiscua, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).*

³⁸ There have been initiatives to bring them back, though, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

³⁹ *Memories of Participant No.85.*

⁴⁰ *Memories of Participant No.85.*

physical proof still connecting these communities to those remembrances of a glorious and festive wheat-producing past.



*Image 5. Herrán's Mill
Images of the exterior and interior of the mill taken during a field visit in Mutiscua, 2019*

‘¡Llegó el INCORA!’ (INCORA arrived!): The Agrarian Reform Projects Córdoba 2 and Bolívar 1

According to the communities' memories, the Institute of the Agrarian Reform INCORA arrived in Nomembromes ('Donotmesswithme') in the municipality of María La Baja and Palo Alto Hicotea (High Bole Turtle) in San Jacinto, to run the project Bolívar 1: the María la Baja irrigation district, in the Los Montes de María sub-region around 1964; and to their Ciénaga de Oro/El Cerrito neighbours in the lower Sinú to build a kind of small drainage district, the project Córdoba 1, around 1966.⁴¹

"INCORA arrived!" For many, this was a hopeful announcement of a better future with the promise of land, water and wellbeing, because they were

⁴¹ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.68; Galeano and Negrete, "El Cerrito. El Pueblo Que Se Quedó Sin Ciénaga y Desde Entonces Sufre de Época Mala Perniciosa."*

led to expect land redistribution. However, as Lopez-Pedrerros mentions, the Alliance's agrarian reform was not merely promoting resource redistribution, but in fact it also drove the formation of new economic subjectivities, an effort to "expand capitalist growth": in this case the aim was to transform peasantries into capitalist industrial farmers.⁴² Therefore, instead of redistribution, INCORA focused initial efforts on installing new colonisation areas and agrarian mega-constructions. In Colombia the progressive spirit of 1960s developmentalism mixed with a legacy of colonial power structures and ever-changing political interests, thereby causing not only deep transformations of the landscape, but also wide cultural transformation. In the next two segments I refer to these local histories as 'The Underwater Parish' and 'The Dried Swamp'.

The Underwater Parish

My ancestors lived where the irrigation district is now. There was a community called Palo Alto Hicotea, in the jurisdiction of the municipality of San Jacinto. They lived there on the banks of the Palo Grande (Big-Trunk) stream or the Sin Cabezas (without-heads) as wise men called it. They fed on purely native food there, there was a big agricultural production and livestock. They had a life we might call comfortable, even though they did not have all their basic services in optimal conditions. I think it was the happiest they have ever lived in history.⁴³

Palo Alto Hicotea and Nomembromes parishes were deliberately flooded as part of the creation of the Playón Reservoir and the Matuya Reservoir between 1964 and 1968. As small settlements very far from any urban centre, they still belonged to the jurisdiction of larger municipalities, but locally they counted with administrative institutions or representatives such as the police inspector and the Communal Action Boards CABs (*Juntas de Acción Comunal* JAC in Spanish). These Boards were still young organisations then, established by law 19 of 1958. In addition to promoting volunteer work by neighbours to solve community problems, they sought to decentralise control and surveillance in those critical post-'*La Violencia*' moments and to integrate communities into the state.⁴⁴ As a result of their dual nature, being both clientelist organisms – or

⁴² A. Ricardo López-Pedrerros, *Makers of Democracy: Transnational Formation of the Middle Classes in Colombia*, Radical Perspectives (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2019), 124.

⁴³ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

⁴⁴ Congress of Colombia, "Law 19/1958," 29835. 9 Diario Oficial Año XCV § (1958).

paternal tools in the words of León Zamosc – and at the same time on-site agents of social development, they were usually not composed of landowners nor landless peasants, but instead comprised of mid-size landowner peasants, usually members of the same families.⁴⁵ It was these CABs which INCORA officials approached when they first arrived in the territories.⁴⁶

At the time that INCORA arrived, Colombian peasantries were very confused about major events taking place in the Americas and how they could affect daily life in the regions. They heard about Cuba on the radio, and some in fact had listened to the Cuban '*Radio Rebelde*' (Rebel Radio Station). Some wanted to become communists, while for others communism was the devil's work. They would have also heard of something called the 'Alliance for Progress' that 'was from the United States'. Not only in the Coast, but in Cunday, Department of Tolima too – closer to the capital where the agrarian reform was piloted - many peasants did not register as potential beneficiaries due to the lack of information. They were afraid and thought that the communists were coming. "I leave before they come to enslave us" some said and fled.⁴⁷ Similarly, in Nomembromes when INCORA offered food aid, people would say "as soon you take that flour, they will close you down", and others replied "no, man!, they will not close you down, what happens is that the government has to give us that, because it is yours by right".⁴⁸ Moreover, the INCORA team's contradictory messages added to peasant's discombobulation. Engineers and supervisors tried to sell the benefits of the reformist projects planned by the government, but sociologists argued against believing blindly in them.⁴⁹

INCORA made the peasants in Palo Alto Hicotea and Nomembromes an offer that they could not refuse, not because of its generosity, but because they really had no other choice. A large irrigation district would be built to provide for agriculture throughout the region, benefiting many, but it was configured mainly

⁴⁵ Mauricio Velásquez Ospina, "Peasant Differentiation and Service Provision in Colombia," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17, no. 4 (October 2017): 779–88; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

⁴⁶ *Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁴⁷ Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria, ed., *Colombia: tierra y paz: experiencias y caminos para la reforma agraria alternativas para el siglo XXI, 1961-2001* (Bogotá: INCORA, 2002), 57.

⁴⁸ *Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁴⁹ *Memories of Participant No.68; Memories of Participant No.72*.

for irrigated rice crops. This district which would be supplied by two reservoirs built on the villages of Nomembromes, with about 29 families in its urban centre and Palo Alto Hicotea with about 60 families, and other smaller neighbouring settlements such as Sitegusta, Las Pilas, Caña, La Mulata, Montecristo, Plátano and Caña de Tigre.⁵⁰ In return, the inhabitants of these parishes would be paid compensation and helped with the acquisition of new homes, agrarian credits, new lands and agrarian technification. However, almost no-one wanted to leave their home or their land. INCORA therefore dispatched a team of sociologists and Colombian academics to help convince the peasants to move.

Some of the foremost intellectuals in Colombia were involved with the government's Social and Agrarian Reform (SAR) initiatives from the beginning, initially with delivering seminars, training, and participating in some of the projects' formulation; then, also in field implementation, or convincing people. Ernesto Guehl, Father Guzmán, Fals-Borda, Clyde Mitchell, Andrew Pearce, Milcíades Chávez and Father Camilo Torres-Restrepo were some of the scholars that initially concurred with 'developmentalist' ideas brought by the Alliance for Progress, and who initially cooperated with the initiative.⁵¹ In the case of Bolívar 1, the Irrigation District of María La Baja, the FAO expert Vicente D'Aponte was involved.⁵² However, after initial enthusiasm for INCORA's developmental projects, sociologists such as Camilo Torres and Fals-Borda soon found that their experiences in the fieldwork on these projects forever changed their perspective on politics, the established order and local powers, and led them to question developmentalism itself.⁵³ It was their capacity for empathy which facilitated their work but also tore them apart from the government service and drove them radically towards the people's service. It was with these Caribbean peasantries that Fals-Borda would later develop his method of Participatory Action Research (PAR), recognising that he ended up

⁵⁰ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁵¹ Guehl worked closely with the INCORA and the Institute of Geography Agustín Codazzi IGAC Ernesto Guehl, "La geografía y la reforma agraria," *Revista Banco de La República*, 1962, Fondo Ernesto Guehl, Caja 63, Carpeta 12, Archivo Histórico Universidad Nacional de Colombia Sede Bogotá; Orlando Villanueva Martínez, *Camilo: acción y utopía*, Línea de Investigación En Historia Política, Universidad Nacional (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Codice Ltda, 1995).

⁵² José Mejía Salazar, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional 1965-1966* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1966).

⁵³ Villanueva Martínez, *Camilo: acción y utopía*; Fals Borda, Moncayo, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*.

learning from those whom he had come to teach.⁵⁴ Old Nomembromes inhabitants remember the sociologists Alzate and Arango, who used to tell them “You do not have to listen to those people [INCORA]. They are here just to give some guidance... This is yours, you decide upon your things”.⁵⁵ These memories may be not entirely accurate but indicate that it is likely that in this project’s case, sociologists strove to give SAR users a positive sense of empowerment, to make them feel like they could be beneficiaries of the intervention if they chose, rather than simply being internally displaced by the state. Yet, the peasants were displaced and the best they could do was to negotiate, through their CAB, with INCORA as to the locations to where they were displaced.⁵⁶

These peasants, however, offered staunch resistance to their displacement. There were protests and blockages. The María La Baja mayor used to send the police to disperse the resulting riots.⁵⁷ The relocated people feared hunger because even though “they were poor, in their food they were rich”.⁵⁸ For them, leaving under promises of credit aid to start all over again represented a great risk that they did not want to take.⁵⁹ Although they were stubbornly determined to stay on their land, with their animals and their *pancoger* plots, machines were already demolishing their ranches.⁶⁰ Thus, some began to accept whatever the government unilaterally determined to pay them for their property, since the value was not subject to negotiation.⁶¹

The Playón reservoir was created by artificially interrupting the course of several water streams which are born in the upper hills of El Carmen de Bolívar and San Jacinto, and which flow into the Arrollo-Grande river, such as Guamanga, Arrollito Maria, El Matambal, La Morena, María José, Cañesco, Camarón and Palmedino, among others. On the other hand, the irrigation district’s secondary reservoir, Matuya, was built between the hills Cerrito de

⁵⁴ Joanne Rappaport, *Cowards Don't Make History: Orlando Fals Borda and the Origins of Participatory Action Research* (Duke University Press, 2020); Fals Borda, *El problema de como investigar la realidad para transformarla por la praxis*; Fals Borda and Moncayo, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*.

⁵⁵ *Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁵⁶ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

⁵⁷ *Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁵⁸ *Memories of Participant No.67*.

⁵⁹ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

⁶⁰ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁶¹ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

Arollo Viento and Arrollo del Medio, by stopping the course of streams such as Matuya, Arrollo del Medio, Cacao, Tigre, Banana, La Mula, Higuierón and Hicotea. Noticeably, in these communities, both old and new generations know by heart the names of their rivers, which are taken mainly from their wild and domestic fauna and flora, as well as other cultural elements. The inhabitants remember that the reservoir took between four and five years to fill. The people who lived there were re-located by INCORA as soon as each of the filling phases was completed or they re-located themselves informally, as the rising waters forced them to leave.⁶²

Most settlements were displaced with or without compensation, except for the *palenque* they called 'El Trozo' (the stump). According to legend, the name comes from a stump of a big tree which was a popular meeting point and shelter for the first Afro-peasant settlers. However, with the arrival of new, Christian *colonos* the name was changed formally to 'San Cristobal', the name that appears on official maps but with which the people do not really identify. They speak of 'El Trozo', the town that refused to leave, and which is still today in the middle of the impoundments. Those who accepted compensation were relocated by the state or took their money and went to live somewhere else. Those who remained witnessed closely how their home, lands and growing plots were flooded, while they moved to higher places, forming new communities adjacent to the reservoir to "feel still within their territory, where they were born"⁶³:

They did not even give them the opportunity to decide the price they thought convenient for their land. No, they offer it. They did not even suggest, they wanted to make the peasant submissive, to accept what they imposed there, like <<take this and get out of here>>. And yeah, the peasant did not accept it and assumed the position << we formed our town here, nearby. At some point the reservoir will be over and then we can get back >>. ⁶⁴

In the case of Palo Alto Hicotea, the parish moved eastward near to the point where the megaproject headquarters were established. By doing this, the parish passed from belonging to the municipality of San Jacinto to being part of

⁶² *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.68; Memories of Participant No.67.*

⁶³ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

⁶⁴ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

María La Baja. They moved to a new settlement that was named Palo Altico in the nearest non-flood zone, which was close to El Playón, a little settlement chosen by INCORA to establish its campsite. Changing municipalities brought a series of deep cultural changes that seen from afar seem minor, but under the magnifying glass of the Afro-descendant community were quite significant. To understand this, it is important to recognise that ethnic groups are not homogeneous, but have their own, divergent internal dynamics, almost forming communities within communities. In this case, although most of these settlements were once *palenques* and many still keep this identity, they recognise that in them they have experienced discrimination and racism. As a consequence of these colonial inheritances, people preferred to be associated with San Jacinto to be less discriminated against, since the population of María La Baja was considered “purely black”. In their own words “it was preferable to move towards San Jacinto to feel a little whiter and avoid racism events”.⁶⁵ Unfortunately, at that time, not even the INCORA sociologists foresaw what this state intervention could mean in terms of causing and strengthening racial tensions and impacting the collective identity in ethnic communities whose complexity was then unknown to them. In such a way, Bolívar 1 project also indirectly acted to reinforce colonial legacies of racism and distrust among Afro-peasant communities.

The word ‘submissive’ or ‘submission’ mentioned by the testimony is related to what the geographer Eloísa Bermán-Arévalo called ‘remembrance of slavery’ in her thesis after a 15-month ethnographic research on-site in María La Baja. For Bermán-Arévalo, the resistance in Palo Alto Hicotea towards the INCORA offer was due to an “emergence of blackness” that made the peasants associate the contract with the state with new forms of slavery.⁶⁶ The Palo Alto rebellion against the displacement could be understood as a manifestation of modern cimarronism. This disobedience, though, brought enormous difficulties to these Afro-peasants in almost every aspect of their daily lives. The only viable place to relocate the former Palo Alto Hicotea households in a non-flood

⁶⁵ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

⁶⁶ The observations and conclusions of Berman’s thesis “Making Space in the Territorial Cracks: *Afrocampesino* politics of land and territory in the Colombian Caribbean” in regards to Palo Alto are available in the paper: Eloísa Berman Arévalo, “The ‘Ruinous Failure’ of Agrarian Reform in Key of Blackness: Afro-Peasant Communities and Liberal Recognition in Montes de María, Colombia,” *Memorias*, no. 30 (May 15, 2019): 117–49.

zone was on the area that the El Playón municipal dump was placed, an area that used to be swampy and poorly drained whose soil was made saline by the landfill, and the lands had become barren.⁶⁷ Without lands or rivers to develop their traditionally organic food production, the peasants survived by being employed as labourers, working for rice and cane farms in the lower lands, while the women washed clothes in El Playón.⁶⁸ El Playón became exceptionally active, full of noise and agitation with the presence of the INCORA workers, who had their canteen there and lived as if they were still in the city. That motivated many to stay around that centre of activity.⁶⁹

Those who embraced the reform scheme also faced their challenges, including coping with being uprooted. INCORA proposed to the Nomembromes CAB to relocate people in a sector farther north called 'El Viso', near a town named Arjona. However, the community refused: "we belong to María la Baja, not to Arjona in the north, nor San Onofre in the south".⁷⁰ There were rumours that INCORA was buying closer lands - including two farms that belonged to wealthy families, called 'La Lucha' and 'El Recreo' - so people asked INCORA to be sent there, and this is how the neighbourhood of 'El Recreo' emerged. Even though it was accompanied by economic compensation, the relocation of peasants had several disfranchising effects. Changing peasant spaces for neighbourhoods attached to urban centres was problematic as it altered the entire culture generated around their previous environment. Their peasant life-style changed from having lands with a hut on them, to having a house and the assistance to purchase land elsewhere. Several sites that were relevant for community cohesion were dismantled, such as the school, the baseball fields and the house of the CAB, which had been built with the voluntary work provided by peasants during their free time. None of those was rebuilt by INCORA.⁷¹ Likewise, the *pancoger* growing plots no longer made sense in lands far from the residence and the kitchen. This was a great paradigm shift for rural women who were usually in charge of the family food and were forced to abandon their subsistence gardens and home-cooking knowledges.

⁶⁷ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

⁶⁸ Berman Arévalo, "The 'Ruinous Failure' of Agrarian Reform in Key of Blackness," May 15, 2019.

⁶⁹ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁷⁰ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

⁷¹ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

This was a problem that Fals-Borda and local peasants had anticipated since the very first INCORA project 'Cunday', as Barraclough noted in his report for the ECLAC-FAO agrarian reform verification mission:

I heard several criticisms among the settlers of this plan to locate them in a small village instead of allowing them to live on their farms. Dr. Orlando Fals-Borda told me afterwards that this has been a serious error and that he doubted very much if it had any possibility of success as the inhabitants of this region had always lived in dispersed lands and strongly resisted any effort to bring them together.⁷²

According to this document, other functionaries dismissed Fals-Borda's apprehension but promised to consult more thoroughly next time they planned a settlement. They agreed to consult the sociologists, however, not the people.

In Cunday, the objective was, apparently, to make the peasantry establish an industrial coffee plantation.⁷³ Similarly, in Los Montes de María, the commercial monoculture of rice was incentivised:

So here we begin to look for what is called 'marketing', to sustain the person, to cover all the expenses through productivity. [Now] You had to sell the rice to buy everything, and you had to sell all the rice, in order to maintain the house. There is a difference, right?.⁷⁴

In a more conceptual perspective, this peasant community went from enjoying food sovereignty, in the sense of having self-sufficiency at family and communal levels, to having their food security dependent on the market entirely. Although *pancoger* initiatives were experimented with on their new lands, the fact of not being present permanently to attend short-cycle crops and exercise surveillance to avoid looting made them fail.⁷⁵ Hence, they came to believe that a land separated from the one who works it can only be destined to monocultures, which is not 'the peasant way' in these Caribbean cultures. The relocated peasants therefore ended up enrolled in a market economy where

⁷² Barraclough, Solon, "Mr. Barraclough's Program of Work Regional Office for Latin America Santiago RU 8/5" (Correspondence, Rome, Italy, 1962), 7, RG 1.2 Series B.D., FAO David Lubin Memorial Library, Rome.

⁷³ Barraclough, Solon, "Mr. Barraclough's Program of Work Regional Office for Latin America Santiago RU 8/5."

⁷⁴ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁷⁵ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

they – mostly the women – no longer could grow their own food but had to buy every ingredient in the supermarket. This forced abandonment of food self-sufficiency capabilities is a form of depeasantisation. In terms of a food security framework, the peasants should ensure that the yield obtained must be enough to guarantee food accessibility through purchasing power.⁷⁶ In other words, now they would only have their food secured for as long as the market allowed it. Therefore, this was also a loss in food sovereignty terms.

Thus, the megaproject that flooded Nomembromes and Palo Alto Hicotea deeply affected the culture and food rights of their former inhabitants. For starters, it split the community in two: El Recreo peasantry (INCORA beneficiaries), and the Palo Alto peasantry who joined the reservoir banks and headwaters settlements. In both cases, the displaced peasants – those who accepted INCORA's offer and those who did not – underwent depeasantisation processes: their social relations changed, many migrated to other regions or to Venezuela, families were separated, and inherited traditions and land tenure continuity were lost. The scheme also intensified racial discord and gender inequality, as the loss of *pancoger* and traditional food culture decreased women's authority within the home and community where they were recognised as wise keepers of both agri-food and cultural traditions. Monoculture settled on the lower areas, labour reciprocity and collective work were extinguished, as was free access to communal resources such as water or fruit trees.⁷⁷

It is fair to say however, that Bolívar 1 as an agrarian reform project did also have positive effects on the region. The irrigation district benefitted cane and rice farmers, both crops being fundamental aspects of the local diet, supporting local food security and that of surrounding markets. Apart from this development that was focused on commercial agriculture, Bolívar 1 also had a collateral positive impact on the peasantries located on and displaced to the reservoir banks. These were significantly benefitted by the presence of the reservoirs, since they facilitated water transport for these populations who needed to make long journeys through hills on mules to reach their lands. This accessibility also facilitated school transport and encouraged the education of

⁷⁶ FAO, "The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015"; Per Pinstrup-Andersen, "Food Security: Definition and Measurement," *Food Security* 1, no. 1 (February 2009): 5–7; FAO, "Food Security Indicators."

⁷⁷ Berman Arévalo, "The 'Ruinous Failure' of Agrarian Reform in Key of Blackness"; *Memories of Participant No.68; Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview)*.

these communities. The water trip was pleasant and cheerful, thereby enhanced general community well-being, and allowed very good fishing – further improving local food security.⁷⁸

In Los Montes de Maria, the rice crops expanded thanks to INCORA's intervention, particularly the priority use of the Marialabaja irrigation district, and guaranteed public crop purchase by INA. However, as will be seen later, INA subsequently disbanded and the credits imposed by INCORA on the depeasantised peasants, who had become rice growers, strangled them in times of loss, creating a new displacement on account of the market and bank usury. The technological supports and tools provided by INCORA such as machinery and infrastructure suffered a gradual disuse, and they were finally looted and dismantled. The survivors of this bankruptcy had to turn their farms into grasslands and lease them – or the lands – not to lose them.⁷⁹ It will also be discussed later how the Irrigation District worked as a strategy of water privatisation. Water that comes from streams used to be considered communal before the project. In more recent times, this has generated conflicts between communities over the usufruct of the same reservoir and its increasing deterioration due to the lack of proper maintenance.

The Dried Swamp

When INCORA arrived at the town of El Cerrito and the surrounding rural areas, there had been no previous consultation with its inhabitants whatsoever, as evidenced by the testimonies collected by sociologists Galeano and Negrete.⁸⁰ These records reveal that people had no idea of what was going on and the drainage of their wetlands took them totally by surprise. This case study was part of the Córdoba 2 SAR project, which ran contemporaneously to Bolívar 1 and is reviewed herein to expose the contrast between the two and to evidence the situation that extended to the east until Cereté (Sucre) in the southern lands of Los Montes de María. This area was characterised by savannahs dominated by latifundia, a landscape which pushed peasantries towards floodplains and swamps. The Córdoba 2 project aimed to organise irrigated plots affecting the

⁷⁸ *Memories of Participant No.67.*

⁷⁹ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁸⁰ Galeano and Negrete, "El Cerrito. El Pueblo Que Se Quedó Sin Ciénaga y Desde Entonces Sufre de Época Mala Perniciosa."

whole area by redistributing allotments to the peasantry. The previous land redistribution SAR project nearby, Córdoba 1, had faced enormous criticism and eventually INCORA had capitulated in favour of the powerful local landlords in 1963.⁸¹ The land redistribution for the Córdoba 1 project never took place.

El Cerrito – a village south-west of Los Montes de María in the Sinú valley region in the department of Córdoba – was one of those ‘Macondo-like’ Caribbean settlements constructed by adventurous peasants who, searching for their own land, fell in love with a *ciénaga* (swamp) near a river, and in the small hills or the *playones* (flat, dry lands) built for themselves a communal sanctuary.⁸² These resulting settlements of communities self-identified as amphibious or ‘*híco tea*-people’, and their food culture was highly dependent on the *ciénaga*’s fauna and waters. Here in the Colombian Caribbean, as happened in many other rural areas of the country during the eighteenth century, when the *fiebre de tierra caliente* extended to the north in the nineteenth century the ‘white-men’ arrived with barbed wire to create *latifundia*. These colonisers appropriated the *playones* mainly to be adapted for livestock with the result that peasants were crowded into the *ciénagas*.⁸³ Galeano and Negrete’s field notes suggest that during this process, the peasants experienced increasing social inequality and a loss of access to natural resources, and therefore would have experienced an increasingly more precarious food situation. Additionally, by not having any security of land-ownership and being at the mercy of tough droughts and heavy monsoon seasons, they were highly vulnerable. Their food security, then, depended highly on an edible ecosystem: the *ciénaga*. This extreme inequality of access to arable land was totally opposite to the principles of an agrarian reform.

⁸¹ Ernest A. Duff, *Agrarian Reform in Colombia*, Praeger Special Studies in International Economics and Development (New York, Washington, London: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1968).

⁸² Macondo is a fictional and magical Caribbean settlement in the famous ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude’. Its foundation story is quite similar to the description in Fals-Borda’s notes on ‘El Cerrito’. These are one of the most remarkable documents in the Fals-Borda Collection of the *Banco de la República*, some material was made by the same inhabitants as a colloquial narrative about the history of the town, its characters, its people, their struggles against the white-man and their reconquest of the land. Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, trans. Gregory Rabassa, 1st [HarperCollins] ed (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); Galeano and Negrete, “El Cerrito. El Pueblo Que Se Quedó Sin Ciénaga y Desde Entonces Sufre de Época Mala Perniciosa.”

⁸³ Galeano and Negrete, “El Cerrito. El Pueblo Que Se Quedó Sin Ciénaga y Desde Entonces Sufre de Época Mala Perniciosa.”

'Land to those who work it' was the popular slogan of 1960s Latin American agrarian reforms. While this idea embodies a strong component of social justice, it has other implications. For instance, what interest could peasantries have in owning land as private property? For indigenous and Afro-descendant societies in the Caribbean in particular, who already exercised a form of 'territoriality' and belonging to this land, what did it mean to create a need for a land title or for land to be demarcated as 'private property'? By following capitalist progressive ideas, the Alliance for Progress reform drove the introduction of individual private property and marketing logics onto peasant bases with multi-diverse cultures. This not only ignored indigenous practices of care and Nature management but also promoted a capitalist style of access to the whole set of material and natural resources – not just land – that were necessary for them to achieve sustainable food security, through usurious credits with banks and payments for water which had previously been seen as communal.⁸⁴ This evidences a tension between what 'land' meant to decision-makers and what it meant for the peasantries they interfered with.

Colombia adopted and adapted the Alliance agrarian reform according to its own capacities, objectives and contradictions. Barraclough himself provided evidence of the initial issues when he visited its first project Cunday to write reports for the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development of ECLAC.⁸⁵ The agrarian reform's general design, with all the good intentions of the friendly countries and the ECLAC, was based on aiming to correct the 'ignorance' and the 'needs' of the rural population, as perceived from the outside. Consequently, the projects were planned and executed in a completely vertical, paternalistic, developmentalist, colonial and patriarchal manner. Take image 6 as example, a carefully planned publicity image of Lleras-Camargo in the final awarding event, under the second National Front president, Guillermo Valencia (1962-1966).⁸⁶ The peasants in the photo play their role as submissive beneficiaries: they appear to feel lost or misplaced, judging by their attitude,

⁸⁴ *Memories of Participant No.39; Memories of Participant No.68*; INCORA, "Informe de actividades en 1962" (Bogotá, Colombia: INCORA, 1963), J 21500, Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.

⁸⁵ Solon Barraclough and Juan Carlos Collarte, *El hombre y la tierra en América Latina. Resumen de los informes CIDA sobre tenencia de la tierra en Argentina, Brasil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Perú.* (Santiago de Chile: ICIRA - Editorial Universitaria, 1962).

⁸⁶ Photo from 'El Tiempo', In: INCORA, "Informe de actividades en 1962."

which is so different from the people in suits who planned, executed and delivered the programme to them; peasants appear as merely passive subjects with no agency in the whole process. The complete absence of rural women is also evident. At that time it was only men as heads of the family who could acquire property, and the third chapter will address how this reform thereby neglected the peasant women.



Image 6. Image of former President Alberto Lleras met a group of the first beneficiaries of the project Tolima 1 (Cunday) in July 1962.⁸⁷

Replicating the Cunday model of land redistribution in further reform projects was problematic. Landlords in areas such as Córdoba were not willing to surrender their domains so easily, and this created undesirable delays; and the time, budget and capacity invested suggested unacceptably high financial projections.⁸⁸ Therefore, after Córdoba 1's failure, the Valencia administration

⁸⁷ INCORA.

⁸⁸As presented by international observers: Solon Barraclough in the 4th Agrarian Reform report, and the widely known Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA) reports, and observations made by Ernest A. Duff and Ernest Feder: Barraclough and Collarte, *El hombre y la tierra en América Latina Resumen de los informes CIDA sobre tenencia de la tierra en Argentina, Brasil, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Perú.*; FAO, "FAO Reports to ECOSOC Preparation of 4th Report on Progress on Land Reform FA 5/5 1960-1965" (Misc.,

reconsidered its strategy, and INCORA started to implement land adjudication in remote uncultivated and isolated territories like the vast uncultivated eastern savannahs, and to implement rural development macro projects like Córdoba 2 and Bolívar 1 that were more industry-friendly, with additional funds being provided by the World Bank.

According to further reports from the Ministry of Agriculture, prior to Córdoba 2, INCORA evaluated the area, and considered that the lands were 'useless' for half the year without drainage or irrigation for climatic reasons. They also observed a large number of smallholders living in 'subhuman' conditions.⁸⁹ This report evidences a colonial view of this 'amphibious' community as 'subhuman', and INCORA's paternalistic approach is evident in the solution: imposing development assistance associated with a 'more civilized' culture. It also reveals a utilitarian view of land and Nature, which in terms of agro-industrial productivism were unserviceable. To develop this mangrove swamp INCORA decided to build a small drainage district in order to create a new agricultural frontier by drying out wetlands. This approach ignored the wetland's biological wealth and ecological function, as had previously occurred in other parts of the world.⁹⁰ The political inertia and engineering processes prevented the abandonment of high investment projects that were backed by INCORA. Between its creation in 1961 and 1970, eighty percent of INCORA's investment corresponded to infrastructure projects.⁹¹ The government decision-makers privileged technical concepts over local experience both in Bolívar 1 and Córdoba 2 cases. It is likely that this happened for two reasons: first, the mechanisms established to include local communities in these decisions were not initiated by the time the works started, and second, the fact that some of these projects had been planned long before or had been already started and

Rome, Italy, 1965 1960), FA 5/5, FAO Archives, Rome; Duff, *Agrarian Reform in Colombia*; Ernest Feder, "Land Reform under the Alliance for Progress," *Journal of Farm Economics* 47, no. 3 (August 1965): 652.

⁸⁹ Armando Samper Gnecco, *El cuatrenio de la transformación rural 1966-1970* (Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería - MADR, 1970).

⁹⁰ Could this be considered 'old fashion engineering'? See: Kirk H Porter, "A Plague of Special Districts," *Nat'l Mun* 22 (1933): 544-47; James E. Herget, "Taming the Environment: The Drainage District in Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)* 71, no. 2 (1978): 107-18; Hugh Prince, "A Marshland Chronicle, 1830-1960: From Artificial Drainage to Outdoor Recreation in Central Wisconsin," *Journal of Historical Geography* 21, no. 1 (January 1995): 3-22; Mary R. McCorvie and Christopher L. Lant, "Drainage District Formation and the Loss of Midwestern Wetlands, 1850-1930," *Agricultural History; Chicago* 67, no. 4 (Fall 1993): 13-39.

⁹¹ Samper Gnecco, *El cuatrenio de la transformación rural 1966-1970*.

were delegated to INCORA. Hence, the Córdoba 2 project was approached more as a huge and costly engineering work than as a Social Agrarian Reform, and included the construction of a dike and flood control, drainage channels, bridges, and cement lining in the canals, among other complementary works.⁹² From the point of view of the *cienaguero* peasants, INCORA arrived without consulting them, acted arbitrarily, and ‘drained their *ciénaga* to build channels’:

The waters trickled down through canals that looked like rivers and ... as the waters ran off, they uncovered fish, *hicotéas* and *caimanes* were twisting desperately in the fine black mud of the bottom of the swamp. Facing this unexpected and sad scene, old men cried in silence.⁹³

The peasant way of life in Los Montes de María, as well as in the Sinú river was connected to seasonal cycles and built around the edible ecosystems of their landscapes, which provided sufficient animal protein and allowed seasonal harvests for household-consumption plus small-scale commercialisation. The destruction of their habitat and the fauna that constituted an important part of the peasants’ diet undermined their food sovereignty and brought food insecurity. In addition, with the disappearance of the swamp and its water cycles, different agriculture techniques were required for new harvests, soil and water management. Within the evaluations and reports and all archives reviewed related to these SAR projects, no functionary, no institution and no scholar at the time mentioned any concern about water cycles, biodiversity or environmental damage, concerns which nowadays are regular.⁹⁴ The only mention I found of this occurs in the peasants’ testimonies taken by Fals-Borda, Galeano and Negrete after the project.

The inhabitants of El Cerrito affirmed that INCORA had promised to deliver 1590 hectares to the landless peasants but failed to do so.⁹⁵ It seems that the Córdoba 1 experience repeated itself elsewhere, since Colombian wetlands drained in the 1960s, were, according to Patiño, used 7.6 per cent for agriculture, and the majority, 56 per cent, for extensive livestock after the

⁹² Samper Gnecco.

⁹³ Galeano and Negrete.

⁹⁴ This is a good example of the ‘silence’ footprint in the archives.

⁹⁵ Galeano and Negrete.

drainage works.⁹⁶ Peasants tried to occupy the *latifundia* and settled in what used to be the *playones* and the swamp basin, but they eventually abandoned hope of INCORA helping to formalise their land tenure. This sense of hopelessness was intensified by losing crops to the floods that were generated due to instability in water levels, and they subsequently left those lands.⁹⁷

INCORA's failure to adjudicate the lands promised to peasants in this and other regions of the country, was a key determinant for the growth of the peasant organisation National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) in the 1970s which will be discussed in the next chapter.

‘¡Nuestros viejos vivieron como reyes!’ (Our old men lived like kings!): The Coffee Pact

Juan Valdez and Conchita: “100% Colombian Coffee”

Coffee is a business.⁹⁸

Antonio Vásquez

Coffee is first and foremost, a business.

Coffee growers – as descendants from *Antioqueño* settlers who came to ‘civilise’ the land and commerce – are ambitious. Ambitious in the best of ways: they made a reputation for their incredibly hard work, determination and ability to create prosperity and well-being. Some of their ancestors came after gold and treasures, and some still have the *guaquero* spirit.⁹⁹ In other words, the coffee region peasant is essentially an entrepreneur, on a small or larger scale. From the humble *chapolero* to the landlord, they understand that coffee is indeed a way to make money. This lets them keep their farms and families, and educate their numerous children, but will not necessarily make them financially wealthy.

⁹⁶ Jorge E. Patiño, “Análisis espacial cuantitativo de la transformación de humedales continentales en Colombia,” *Biota Colombiana* 16, no. 3 (July 15, 2016): 85–105.

⁹⁷ Galeano and Negrete.

⁹⁸ *Memories of Participant No. 1 Antonio Vásquez (Interview 1), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).

⁹⁹ *Memories of Participant No. 15 Mario Cardona (Interview 10), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Villa María, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No. 31 Anonymous (Interview 24), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Quimbaya, Quindío, Colombia, 2019).

Coffee, called in the early twentieth century 'the engine of the economy' in Colombia, made up a considerable eighty per cent of exports in the 1960-70s, and around half of this production originated in the coffee zone of Antioquia and Old Caldas.¹⁰⁰ The industrious peasants from these regions had a special dignity that is still embodied in the word *cafeteros*. They were national heroes in the mid to late twentieth century, at least before obvious market inefficiencies came to light.¹⁰¹

As the *cafetero* was Colombia's domestic economy champion, the state protected and indulged the coffee sector while it remained the country's primary export. During most of the twentieth century, an important part of the state's apparatus was dedicated towards supporting coffee production, such as the diplomatic service, treasury and ministry of agriculture.¹⁰² Coffee policies in Colombia have been developed through an exercise of power and symbiotic cooperation shared by private institutions and the state, efficiently led by the coffee elite. These elites, the most illustrious dynasties of the coffee industry, created a powerful tool for representing their interests with the establishment of FEDECAFÉ, which was created in 1927.¹⁰³

"Meet the Family Behind 100% Colombian Coffee" says the welcome page of the website created by the Federation to promote Colombian coffee.¹⁰⁴ The language illustrates the self-perceived role of this enormous institution in the world of coffee growing in this country: a patriarchal provider and protector of unquestionable authority, who manages family resources and makes

¹⁰⁰ Nieto Arteta, *El café en la sociedad colombiana*.

¹⁰¹ Rodrigo Parra Sandoval, "La educación rural en la zona cafetera colombiana," CEPAL - Proyecto "Desarrollo y educación en América Latina y el Caribe," Setiembre 1978, repositorio.cepal.org; Karim León Vargas and Juan Carlos López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017: 90 años, vivir el café y sembrar el futuro* (Federación Nacional de Cafeteros, 2017); Palacios Rozo, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850 - 1970*.

¹⁰² León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017*; Richard B. Bilder, "The International Coffee Agreement: A Case History in Negotiation," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 28, no. 2 (1963): 328; Hernando Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1959. Tomo I," Informe Ministerio de Hacienda al Congreso de la República de Colombia (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1959), bdigital.unal.edu.co, Repositorio Institucional Universidad Nacional; Hernando Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1960. Tomo I," Informe Ministerio de Hacienda al Congreso de la República de Colombia (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Hacienda, 1960), bdigital.unal.edu.co, Repositorio Institucional Universidad Nacional; Gilberto Arango Londoño, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1959* (Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1959).

¹⁰³ García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera*.

¹⁰⁴ FEDECAFÉ, "Colombian Coffee Family," *Café de Colombia*, 2011, <http://www.cafedecolombia.com/en/familia>.

decisions on behalf of all its members. It is beloved and looked upon with submission and gratitude by some coffee growers, and with criticism, irreverence and desire for independence by others.

The peasants interviewed for this project widely recognise that the level of well-being and certain social development enjoyed by coffee communities – which from a very western point of view can be considered more ‘developed’ or ‘civilised’ than other rural remote areas of the country – is due to the Federation’s management of the ‘coffee resources’. The ‘coffee resources’ refer primarily to the coffee export taxes paid by all the producers which are collected by the government and kept in a special fund, the National Coffee Fund (FNC) which is administered by the Federation. Thanks to this economic support, the Federation supra-state was able, in an initial phase of investments, to supply the population with housing and basic services, and build the coffee institutions’ infrastructure between 1940s and 1950s. Additionally, they funded roadbuilding, health assistance, education, investigation and technical services in a second phase more focused on productivity than family wellbeing, from the 1960s onwards.¹⁰⁵

Evidently, coffee was for a long time the largest generator of foreign exchange for Colombia, and therefore the sector enjoyed significant freedom for manoeuvre: peasants depict the Federation as almost having replaced the state as guarantor of basic services to Coffee Axis populations.¹⁰⁶ In the 1960-70s, the Federation's main role was serving as a local buyer, logistics operator and stock manager, to balance the fact that the coffee trade has always been prone to instability. Being a commodity, coffee can present a tremendous price fluctuation – which was particularly evident after World War II – and being a permanent crop, it requires initial investments with years of anticipation.¹⁰⁷ This means that the grower is highly vulnerable to bankruptcy when prices drop. Moreover, when prices go up, production increases massively, and this creates a delayed effect of oversupply years later; hence, the importance of the

¹⁰⁵ León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017*; García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera*; Palacios Rozo, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850 - 1970*.

¹⁰⁶ *Memories of Participant No. 1; Memories of Participant No. 16; Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 20, 21 (Collective Interview), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Naranjal, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ Bilder, “The International Coffee Agreement.”

existence of an entity who guarantees purchase, regulates the internal price, and provides stable conditions to the producers which an unregulated coffee market cannot offer. Therefore, the Colombian government and FEDECAFÉ – overcoming partisan rivalries – were very closely allied when it came to negotiating alternatives to a just trade of this product worldwide, considering price volatility and intrinsic crop characteristics.¹⁰⁸

In the 1950s the world's markets were experiencing a coffee crisis due to overproduction. Although two thirds of the production originated in Brazil and Colombia at that point, almost all of Latin America suffered the impact. To correct this situation in an impartial manner for buyers and producers, the first agreement on quotas was signed by Latin American countries in Mexico in 1957.¹⁰⁹ The pact compliance for Colombia involved enormous efforts by the government in issuing local currency and payment bonuses, raising inflation and generally encouraging fiscal recession, and FEDECAFÉ accrued debt from the government caused by overproduction.¹¹⁰ The industry had to commit to these opportunities for improvement and this led to a radical modernisation of coffee policies starting from the XXI Colombian Coffee Congress occurring in 1959.¹¹¹ Palacios discusses how the coffee grower in Colombia went from hero to villain, blamed for overproduction and inefficiencies affecting an entire country – nay, an entire continent.¹¹² Then began a new era for Colombian coffee characterised externally by market interventions and strategic advertising, and internally by a commitment to education: the peasant had to be taught to be productive and efficient.

The education of the consumer was also key. A campaign towards the recognition of high-quality Colombian coffee was felt to be needed, so the public would demand it from coffee roasters and sellers. The coffee leaders commissioned the American ad agency Doyle Dane Bernbach to create a

¹⁰⁸ García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera*; Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1959. Tomo I"; Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1960. Tomo I."

¹⁰⁹ Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1959. Tomo I," sec. Política Cafetera.

¹¹⁰ Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1959. Tomo I"; Palacios Roza, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850 - 1970*.

¹¹¹ In XXI coffee congress, FEDECAFÉ diagnosed that 365 plantations had less than 1 hectare and 58% between 1 and 10, and interpreted that this vast majority of small farms with low production were the cause of low coffee income Agudelo Villa, "Memoria de Hacienda presentada al Congreso Nacional de 1959. Tomo I."

¹¹² Palacios Roza, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850 - 1970*.

symbol to represent not a brand but a concept: "100% Colombian coffee", the 'original coffee' associated with high quality, to identify Colombian coffee and the Federation itself. Despite strong internal and external controversy about the risk of using a coffee peasant as a symbol, its creators managed to position the image of a modest peasant with *ruana* (type of poncho), *tapapinche* (type of apron), *aguadeño* (type of hat) and espadrilles accompanied by a mule as the key icon of Colombian coffee, an image that would become one of the most recognised food market icons ever. On the other hand, Juan Valdez and his mule Conchita can also be understood as part of the peasant education strategy. The icon has a reflective dimension, being at the same time a role model representing all the *cafetero* 'good virtues': honest, hardworking, reliable, entrepreneurial and a family-man.

The population in the coffee region, however, has not been a homogeneous group. The coffee society, known locally as the '*tejido social del café*' (coffee-based social tissue), is a mixture of individual roles that involve nomadic collectors called *chapoleros* or *recolectores*, the day labourers who usually come from the urban towns nearby. These labourers could be landless peasants or just simply general workers, administrators and/or sharecroppers and small, medium, or large coffee growers, also landowners or tenants, and even landlords who may or may not live on the farm. All of these benefited in different ways from the coffee market but had different interests and cultures.¹¹³

The majority of peasants who participated in this research project are small and medium-sized landowners and administrators, sharecroppers, tenants and *alimentadoras* (dinner ladies for coffee-pickers). The *alimentadoras*, traditionally administrators' wives, are in charge of cooking and serving three meals a day for labourers whose numbers have been highly variable. Every coffee farm, small, medium, or the few remaining large, all

¹¹³ Ramirez Bacca distinguishes different job titles for the same – or almost the same – job role: *viviente, terrazgero, porrambero, partijero, mediasquero, cosechero, agregado* or *aparcerero*. The law tried to approximate them all to *aparceros* so INCORA could facilitate them assistance as peasants. However, *aparceros* in the coffee region could also be according to the type of contract, *arrendatarios, tabloneros, agregados* or *contraistas*: Renzo Ramírez Bacca, Yobenj Aucardo Chicangana-Bayona, and Susana Ynés González Sawczuk, *Historia, trabajo, sociedad y cultura*, 1. ed, Ensayos Interdisciplinarios, vol. 1 (Medellín: Universidad Nacional de Colombia-Sede Medellín, Grupo de Investigación Historia, Trabajo, Sociedad y Cultura, 2008). On the coffee elites, see: William García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera: El Quindío, un caso paradigmático*, Primera edición (Armenia, Quindío [Colombia]: Centro de Publicaciones, Universidad del Quindío, 2017).

depend heavily on labour, which is scarce, nomadic and very unstable.¹¹⁴ These people, as they are not producers, have no 'coffee-card' – that is, they are not part of FEDECAFÉ, therefore they cannot receive the same benefits of education and aid from it. They have usually been a forgotten population until the appearance later of independent and alternative coffee peasant associations such as the Coffee Union.¹¹⁵

For most of the coffee growers interviewed, the international crises of price, overproduction, and negotiations of the 1960s were not well known at the time, except the collapse of the coffee pact in 1989 which looms large in their memories. Reviewing the interviews, it is sometimes hard to separate individual living memory from the collective memory of this period, which seems partially moulded by Federation influence. While peasants enjoyed a modest well-being, 'Father' Federation took over the family's finances and necessary international negotiations. Therefore, when FEDECAFÉ's president Don Arturo Gómez-Jaramillo came to office in 1958, he was determined to include more countries in the Latin American proposal for a quota agreement.¹¹⁶

The International Coffee Pact

The US Secretary of State Dean Rusk described the International Coffee Pact in his speech to the US Senate for its approval in 1962 as “a major accomplishment for the Alliance for Progress”.¹¹⁷ In Punta del Este, Uruguay, during the signing of the Alliance for Progress in August 1961, the US ratified its commitment with a pact of nations to regulate coffee supply, correct product inelasticity and guarantee fair prices. The International Coffee Agreement (ICA) was finally signed in New York on 28 September 1962 by 37 nations, including not only Latin American nations and the USA, but also European and African countries were invited, even though after the Treaty of Rome, Latin American

¹¹⁴ *Memories of Participant No.22 Anonymous (Interview 16), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Chinchiná, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participant No.7; Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview); León Vargas and López Díaz, Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017; García Rodríguez, Élités y poder en la economía cafetera.*

¹¹⁵ “La «bonanza» cafetera: otra riqueza arrebatada al pueblo,” *Tribuna Roja*, August 1977, 28 edition; *Memories of Participant No.38 Oscar Gutiérrez (Interview 31), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Armenia, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); Unión Cafetera Colombiana, Aspectos generales del café, Cartilla de Estudio 1 (Manizales, Caldas [Colombia]: Editores S.A., 2005).*

¹¹⁶ León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017.*

¹¹⁷ “International Coffee Agreement, 1962,” *International Legal Materials* 1, no. 2 (1962): 236–75.

countries feared that Europe would privilege trade with its ex-colonies. The two southern continents hoped to share the US market which at that time consumed half the coffee in the world. The ICA was signed under the principle of stabilising prices above 1962 rates, through a careful control of production quotas by country and the guarantee of origin for all coffee traded with the signatory consumers.¹¹⁸

Price stabilisation allowed FEDECAFÉ to establish a stable income stream through parafiscal export taxes and investment capacity to plan and execute works for approximately one and a half billion US dollars while it lasted, between 1963 and 1989, which was an increase of investment of 2310 per cent in a yearly average in comparison with the previous two decades (1944-1962), as shown in table 3. These numbers published by FEDECAFÉ in 2017 speak eloquently; Mr. Rusk was right, this was indeed a major accomplishment of the Alliance for Progress.¹¹⁹ The Federation undertook these investments without disrupting the peasantries. In contrast to what happened with SAR projects where decisions were made behind desks, the guild was formed by producers well aware of their own immediate needs. Their investments benefitted the whole region through basic service provision and infrastructure for the people, as well as for agrarian production, as table 3 reveals.

¹¹⁸ "International Coffee Agreement, 1962."

¹¹⁹ Own calculation based on figures published by FEDECAFÉ León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017*, 29.

Investment (Million USD- 2016 Value)			Average Year		
Component	1944-1962	1963-1989	1944-1962	1963-1989	Variation
Household/Basic services	\$34.10	\$1,149.72	\$1.79	\$42.58	2273%
Roads	\$0.00	\$185.42	\$0.00	\$6.87	
Education	\$0.00	\$63.18	\$0.00	\$2.34	
Health	\$0.00	\$4.13	\$0.00	\$0.15	
Communal infrastructure	\$0.13	\$32.35	\$0.01	\$1.20	17369%
Productive infrastructure	\$7.81	\$4.92	\$0.41	\$0.18	-56%
Total	\$42.04	\$1,439.73	\$2.21	\$53.32	2310%

Table 3. FEDECAFÉ Investment in infrastructure (1944-1989).
Source: León Vargas and López Díaz, 2017

Cafetero peasants recall that in this period they were satisfied while they could freely develop their identity, live their culture and have abundant food according to their taste. They did not feel needy, even when they went barefoot, even if they had to work hard to get the perfect ‘100% Colombian coffee’.¹²⁰ The common expression: “To heaven only if they send me the mule”, reflects the generalised feeling that the only place that could be better than their land was heaven and still the coffee growers would only go there if they are forced to.¹²¹ This was the main effect of food aid policies in the Coffee Axis coffee culture: better than heaven! This situation however occluded a huge risk in terms of the stability dimension of food security: dependency.

FEDECAFÉ’s new educational campaigns implied the slow and gradual adoption of capitalist ideals among the local peasant culture that paved the way towards depeasantisation, deforestation and food insecurity in future decades. By having a focus on education, the coffee farmer was taught to prioritise ‘production’ and ‘trade’, even from before their peers in Santurbán or on the north coast. In Los Montes de María, this phenomenon occurred with rice and its consequences will be seen in later chapters. In the case of Santurbán, with no prioritisation of local purchase by the INA or the mills, the farmers migrated

¹²⁰ *Memories of Participant No.7.*

¹²¹ *Memories of Participant No.1; Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview).*

to the crops that were commercially available, but not with a real productivist or capitalist mindset. In contrast, in the coffee region, due to the vision of the Federation's leaders, the idea of the productive peasant took hold and took form. The massive formation of an entrepreneurial peasantry obsessed with yields had its origin in the XXI Coffee Congress in 1959.¹²² Consequently, in subsequent decades the coffee plantations absorbed more and more space from other crops, even when they were key for the coffee culture such as those used for seasonal sweets and festivities. Even more, as the coffee budget was distributed through the departmental coffee committees according to their productivity, the Old Caldas as a department split into three: Caldas, Risaralda and Quindío. Before the division all Old Caldas municipalities' productivity used to count to the Manizales Coffee Committee's budget, but with the new political division, Armenia's and Pereira's committees could manage their own budget. Therefore, this 'productivity' mindset also occasioned loss of cohesion among communities and the whole coffee society to the point of igniting the division of the department of Caldas and feeding the ambition that drove the 1980s deforestation.¹²³

Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed both the improvements and negative impacts on peasant food sovereignty and the landscape of developmentalist reformism associated with US aid in Colombia in the 1960s. From the peasants' perspective in Los Montes de María and Santurbán the change was imposed from above and highly disruptive of their food sovereignty, peasant culture, local ecosystems and the agroecosystems in their territories. In the coffee sector, however, the American contributions were not represented in funds or assistance, but in a deal regulating quotas and prices, which from the coffee growers' perspective, seemed beneficial, and considering the Federation's interventions, even paternal. The Social and Agrarian Reform (SAR) from the Alliance for Progress, the Food for Peace Act and the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) were designed to gather friends and allies in the Cold War and

¹²² Carlos Alberto Saldías Barreneche and Carlos Mario Jaramillo Cardona, "40 años del servicio de extensión," *Ensayos Sobre La Economía Cafetera*, 1999.

¹²³ The separation also obeyed to political parties dominating different areas of Caldas.

exert influence to enforce a Western development model. As such, they functioned as neo-colonial interventions. Layered beneath these power dynamics in the Colombian case, these initiatives also functioned as colonial local interventions, due not only to the lack of consultation or knowledge of cultures and ecosystemic balances but also misguided assumptions about the peasantry as unproductive, passive, ignorant, and submissive. Consequently, their application in practice caused collateral damage.

The agents of the SAR in Colombia were new and robust institutions such as the new Institute of the Agrarian Reform (INCORA) and the Agricultural Market Institute (INA, later IDEMA), who oversaw the operations needed to realise these programmes. While INCORA implemented Agrarian Reform projects focused on land redistribution, INA coordinated the trade by establishing agricultural prices through stocks in defence of the interest of both consumers and producers. The coffee region, however, already had its own institution – FEDECAFÉ – who held such power that it administered the public coffee budget for almost a century. The power of this coffee elite has been based on its ability to provide all kinds of goods and services to coffee growers, while guaranteeing the local purchase and international marketing at a reasonable price; therefore, the lifespan of the International Coffee Agreement (1962-1989) provided its golden years.

This chapter has reviewed a wide variety of effects caused by agrarian policies in the 1960s, most of them counter-reformist and depeasantising, such as displacement, soil use changes, market barriers and food sovereignty loss of different natures in each sub-region. Firstly, in Santurbán, American cereal imports increased during the 1960s. In particular, the wheat surplus sent by the US to 'friendly nations' opened the doors for commercial wheat imports that gradually replaced local production, forcing peasants to migrate to other crops and change their food habits, and to change the soil use severely and put more pressure on fragile ecosystems. The disappearance of wheat from the Santurbán hills not only changed the landscape drastically, it also ended communal traditions and social exchanges that happened around these crop cycles. The regional mills whose work depended on a short logistic chain also closed and now lie in ruins.

Secondly, in Los Montes de María and lower Sinú: the agrarian reform under the second National Front administration, after having many difficulties in

redistributing arable land, focused on agricultural infrastructure megaprojects such as Córdoba 2 and Bolívar 1. These were imposed on the communities and their territories, without prior consultation but under a landownership promise, which in the case of the swamp El Cerrito was never fulfilled, according to the *cienagueros*. Peasants' were rightfully alarmed about the potential impacts to their surrounding Nature which was linked to their food sovereignty and lifestyles, as INCORA had no strategy to repair the negative environmental impacts of their interventions. In the cases of Palo Alto Hicotea and Nomembromes, communities were broken up. Some people became residents in a town's new neighbourhood and had to develop commercial plots. This relocation forced them to abandon the farm and the subsistence crops. Others left the territory. Some refused to be reallocated and stayed near the reservoir, readapting to live from it. In all the cases peoples affected by Córdoba 2 and Bolívar 1 had to suddenly and drastically change their agri-food traditions with higher impact on the rural women usually in charge of the family's nutrition. The anti-peasantism displayed by decision-makers in the 1960s rural Colombia was not addressed to the peasants or the communities but to peasant agricultural practices considered archaic and not productive enough. Additionally, the projects had no understanding of local inter-racial dynamics among Afro-peasant communities and therefore accentuated racial discord. At the time, the UN peasant rights did not exist – if they had, almost all of them would probably have been considered violated. These cases have demonstrated how technocratic and top-down reforms abstracted from local knowledge and realities had counter-reformist and depeasantising effects in practice.

Finally, and conversely, in the Coffee Axis the 1960s was a golden decade for coffee growers – the coffee agreement was achieved granting proper prices to producers, the Juan Valdez brand and educational strategy, appeared to teach consumers that '100% Colombian coffee' was the best in the whole world, and new training strategies to boost productivity and cooperative promotion plans were put in practice by the National Coffee Federation. The Federation provided like a father for the coffee family, it built roads, households, and services infrastructure, and more besides. The success of the pact in channelling resources to Colombia and the region facilitating the rural investment made the Federation's paternalist intervention work smoothly with

almost no questioning by the peasants. Thus, coffee grower peasantries became highly dependent on the coffee market and the Federation.

None of the communities from the case studies recalled suffering hunger due to these events, and yet it does not mean that their food security and food sovereignty were unaffected. In Santurbán, Sinú valley and Los Montes de María, either they lost the main fundamental basis of their livelihood or had to change their food heritage or adapt their recipes to the ingredients available according to the new situation or market's whim. The vertical imposition of developmentalist aid schemes unleashed processes of landscape transformation that were disconnected with local realities, causing both negative and positive impacts on peasant communities' food security and food sovereignty. As will be studied in the next chapters, for these three cases their cultures, traditions and landscape suffered drastic alterations. While this chapter clearly evidenced the neo-colonial character of agrarian reformist interventions and their impacts on local realities, the next chapter deals with the internally colonial response by powerful *terrateniente* allyships as drivers of counter-reform.

The 1960s agrarian policies of the National Front ultimately initiated a series of depeasantising transformations in the three sub-regions studied. These were based on developmentalist and capitalist paradigms associated with international food regimes, but internally executed with anti-peasant agendas causing negative impacts on the peasant landscape and food sovereignty in later decades.

CHAPTER 3. 'The Landless Women'

Gendering Peasant Food Security and Food Sovereignty in 1970s Counter-reformist Colombia

This chapter is centred on the decade of the Chicoral Pact, an agreement aimed to transform the Social Agrarian Reform (SAR). It deals with the nature of the *terratiente* alliance who signed it and – most importantly – its effects on peasants' rights and food sovereignty. This agreement, popularly recognised as 'the *terratiente* counter-reform' or 'the' counter-reform, reversed the spirit and achievements of the SAR. It was openly anti-peasant and pro-local elites. Methodologically, this chapter adopts a gender perspective to argue that *terratiente* coalitions such as the Chicoral Pact have acted as patriarchal associations perpetuating structures of power and domination. Although the socio-political impact of the counter-reforms studied in this thesis is heavily gendered over the whole period (1961-2013), the gender analysis is particularly emphasised in this chapter. The reason for this is to analyse the hegemonic masculine authority of *terratientes* as agents of depeasantisation in the 1970s and, relatedly, the feminisation of food security and its importance. The historical content within sections dedicated to the sub-regions of study is uneven. That is, it is denser in the section dedicated to Los Montes de María, because among the peasantries involved in this study, the *Montemariano* communities received higher impacts from the *terratiente* counter-reform. However, microhistories from Santurbán and the Coffee Axis feed the gender discussions of *terratientes* and peasant women's roles in local food security and food sovereignty, as well as in highlighting the threats they faced as a consequence of events in the 1970s.

In contrast with the previous chapter, which focused on international influence on Colombia resulting from American aid and developmentalist policies imposed on peasantries in the 1960s, the present chapter focuses on analysing national, regional and local evidence of how internal colonialism shaped the 1970s agrarian counter-reform in Colombia. While the previous chapter used a bottom-up narrative style to analyse the roles of American and

Colombian governments as anti-peasant reformist agents, this chapter uses peasant women's perspectives to focus on *terratenientes* and their allies as the anti-peasant reformist agents. It demonstrates how the rural structures of power were maintained by patriarchal, racist and classist colonial legacies. In turn, it shows how these power structures framed and executed the counter-reform through the political relationships formed between *terrateniente* landlords, the government and other allies. Overall, this chapter makes a twofold claim regarding patriarchalism as a key form of colonial oppression upon peasantries in 1970s Colombia: first, that it diminished the significance of women to agri-food systems and, by extension, undermined food sovereignty; and second, that while it abused and repressed peasantries in general, rural women in particular were heavily impacted through the exercise of different types of violence originating from the *terrateniente*-backed administration. The critical analyses of the 1970s counter-reformist events in this chapter, therefore, are inspired by decolonial feminist scholars who highlight the intersections between racism, classism, patriarchy and colonial legacies, including works by Rivera-Cusicanqui, Lugones and Segato.¹

This chapter approaches the figure of the *terrateniente* as a capitalist depeasantising agent through the oral memories contributed by rural women specifically from the three sub-regions of study – especially from Los Montes de María – to underline the gendered nature of abuses and injustices that shaped this period. Peasant women were particularly affected, as due to SAR they were *sin-tierra* (landless); only men were initially accepted as agrarian reform benefactors. Women's testimonies also nuance existing male-based knowledge about the Chicoral Pact counter-reform, and broaden understandings of the role of women in the peasant movement and food sovereignty in Colombia.² They reinforce the argument from several scholars that the counter-reform was

¹ Rivera Cusicanqui, "El Potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia"; Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa*, 2010; Rita Laura Segato, *La crítica de la colonialidad en ocho ensayos: y una antropología por demanda* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Prometeo Libros, 2015); María Lugones, "Colonialidad y género: hacia un feminismo descolonial," in *Género y Descolonialidad*, ed. Walter Mignolo, Isabel Jiménez Lucena, and M. V. Tlostanova, *Pensamiento crítico y opción descolonial* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones del Signo and Globalization and the Humanities Project (Duke University), 2008), 13–54.

² The most recognised works in the historiography of SAR and the Chicoral Pact have been provided by male authors such as Fals-Borda, Zamosc, Díaz-Callejas, Fajardo, Machado, Villamil-Chaux, Pérez or Correa.

produced by the collusion of rural elites and the state.³ More importantly, they support the argument that colonial aspects of *terrateniente* capitalism – such as property domain, or control and accumulation of Nature, peasants and women – are associated with depeasantisation, food insecurity and environmental impact. These intersections show that the Pact which drove the repression of the peasant movement in the 1970s was no isolated case, but a symptom of a deeply rooted internal colonialism in patriarchal agrarian institutions that operated with openly anti-peasant agendas. The *terrateniente* coalition, therefore, has reappeared in other time periods through initiatives such as the Ralito Pact (2002) and the ‘Oil palm *dispositif*’ (2012), as will be studied further in Chapter 5.

This chapter proposes three different levels of argument, some of which resonate across later chapters, but which were particularly prominent in the 1970s. Firstly, it argues that the *terrateniente* coalition which brought the counter-reform is a patriarchal and colonialist alliance which preceded the Chicoral Pact, oppressed the peasantry, and was perpetuated throughout the period of study. This counter-reform is evidenced in all its intensity through the accounts of female victims. Secondly, even in the cases where patriarchalism took a form of benevolent paternalism, its facilitation of food security was predicated on the exploitation of rural women’s labour. This chapter deals with the primary confrontation which has always faced the Colombian peasantry: *terratenientes*. However, the evidence also challenges in places the ‘good peasant/bad landlord’ dichotomy, by presenting divergent voices and examples, such as the ‘good landlord’ or ‘patriarchal peasant’ cases. Finally, this chapter reflects on women’s roles in peasant activist actions such as the land occupations, or ‘land’s recuperations’ as they were termed by peasants, either

³ These are some of the scholars who have reviewed extensively the Chicoral Pact as an agrarian counter-reform: Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*; Absalón Machado Cartagena and Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, eds., *La política de reforma agraria y tierras en Colombia: esbozo de una memoria institucional*, 1. ed (Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013); Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, Rocío del Pilar Peña Huertas, and María Mónica Parada Hernández, eds., *La Tierra Prometida: Balance de La Política de Restitución de Tierras En Colombia*, 1st ed. (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2019); Rocío Londoño Botero and Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Tierras y conflictos rurales: historia, políticas agrarias y protagonistas*, 2016; Carlos Villamil Chau, *La reforma agraria del Frente Nacional: de la concentración parcelaria de Jamundí al Pacto de Chicoral*, Primera edición (Bogotá: UTADEO Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, 2015); Albán, “Reforma y contrarreforma agraria en Colombia”; Mauricio Uribe-López, “Estilo de desarrollo y sesgo anticampesino en Colombia,” *Cuadernos de Economía* 32, no. 60 (December 2013): 467–97.

as male ANUC members' wives or as part of the ANUC's 'female front'. As such, women were also agents of agrarian reform, as well as of food sovereignty and peasant collective memory, capacities which, I argue, have not been properly acknowledged. By doing this, the present thesis contributes to building the untold 'herstories' of the Chicoral pact, the terrateniente coalition and peasant organisation itself.

To deliver these complex analyses, this chapter comprises four segments. It starts with an overview of the key developments in the 1970s in the segment '*Campesinas y terratenientes*', then moves to explain the patriarchal nature of the terratenientes' authority in the territories, varying from abusive to benevolent in '*Las deshonradas y las alimentadoras*'. The next section, called 'Nature literacy', develops the narratives rescued in the 1970s by sociologists such as Fals-Borda and Negrete, to highlight the importance of women's participation in the peasant movement as well as in the preservation of peasant culture, which involves not only food but also collective memory. Finally, the section '*Las roba-tierras*' focuses on the peasant movement ANUC, the role of women in the land reform and women's accounts regarding the repression displayed and other forms of violence and impacts of the counter-reform.

Campesinas and terratenientes' in the 1970s: Historical Context

In the late 1960s the land redistribution proposed by the SAR accelerated under the government of Lleras-Restrepo (1966-1970). Its enactment was characterised by heightened levels of peasant involvement instigated by the Decree 755 of 1967 which created the National Association of Agrarian Reform Users (ANUC), an organization formed entirely by peasants who, for the first time, could have seats in public institutions and decision-making tables.⁴ In the 1970s, however, *terrateniente* power structures – a form of 'colonial lordship' as interpreted by peasant women's testimonies – colluded with the government of Misael Pastrana (1970-1974) to repress the burgeoning peasant movement and halt land reform. Los Montes de María was one of the sub-regions where the

⁴ Presidencia de la República de Colombia, "Decree 755/1967," Pub. L. No. 755, 32225 Diario Oficial. Año CIII (1967).

subsequent repression and persecution of peasant leaders was particularly fierce, it being a zone with a large, highly active ANUC branch.

In Chapter 1, the latifundia was presented as a land tenancy structure spread across various lower lands in Colombia such as Los Montes de María, and in general in the Caribbean Coast. The *terratenientes*, which were and are the latifundia landlords, acquired a great power during the first half of the twentieth century, which extended beyond their domains in the form of great influence over rural public institutions. Peasant testimonies highlight their belief that it was these *terratenientes* that INCORA should have ‘taken lands from’, to redistribute them among the tenants whom the *terratenientes* looked upon as serfs or pawns. Even though land redistribution is not enough to achieve food security, it is the foundation of it and a premise of food sovereignty, and in the 1960s, ECLAC scholars also considered it an essential aspect of substantial agrarian reforms proposed for Latin America. As seen in the previous chapter, however, in the case of Colombia, some INCORA projects were more focused on agrarian developmentalism or new settlement colonial projects instead. This deviation from the reform's main goal was mainly due to the obstruction and antagonism to land redistribution from powerful *terratenientes* and their allies.⁵

The peasant testimonial contributions to this research nuance the understanding of what constitutes a *terrateniente*. Although the word literally means landlord or landowner, not every large landowner was considered to be a *terrateniente*, and there seemed to be no female *terratenientes*. What makes a *terrateniente* then? According to these peasants, not only the amount of land owned but, most importantly, the colonialist and patriarchal power exercised through influence, possession and accumulation capacity. Regarding the masculine character attributed to this term, although there were female landowners such as peasant widows, there is no record of them being called *terratenientes*, which suggests that this has usually been a denomination reserved for men who behaved with greed and dominance.⁶

⁵ As mentioned by them for instance in: Barraclough, Solon, “Mr. Barraclough’s Program of Work Regional Office for Latin America Santiago RU 8/5”; Barraclough, “The Legacy of Latin American Land Reform,” November 1994; Barraclough, “Review of The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America”; Raúl Prebisch, “Aspectos económicos de la Alianza,” in *La Alianza para el Progreso: problemas y perspectivas*, trans. Ignacio de Miranda, Primera Ed. (México D.F.: Editorial Novaro México S.A., 1962), 59–98.

⁶ *Memories of Participant No.72*.

In deriving their power from land tenure, *terratenientes* sought further land accumulation, and success in this allowed them to subdue and control landless peasants – including women and children – whom they used as instruments of land transformation within their terrains. To comply with the ‘well-exploited’ lands rule established by the Law 200 of 1936, landlords justified land accumulation and tenure by retaining peasants attached to their land and using them to ‘civilise’ it. To civilise the land in the rural vernacular language meant to make it ‘productive’ and either transform it through pasturage so *terratenientes* could eventually exploit it extensively and then eliminate the workforce, or mechanise the production to the same effect.⁷ The *terratenientes* were careful not to retain peasant labour beyond the timeframe established by the regulations, which would have allowed peasants to claim rights to those lands. As a result, these peasants were left without legal grounds for any claim. The SAR aimed to correct such situations. However, during its first eight years it failed to acquire the expected lands worked by peasants to provide to them partly because INCORA lacked both the capability and power to oppose the *terratenientes*. In that context, Lleras-Camargo opted for a more aggressive approach by appealing to the peasants in the ANUC to pressure despotic landlords to sell.

ANUC was the largest peasant movement in Colombia, incorporating more than a million families at its height, and its strongest and most radical branch was the so-called ‘Sincelejo line’ based in Los Montes de María. Two factors that facilitated this development in the Caribbean region were the existence of remnants of past initiatives, such as the peasant leagues and various small peasant revolts in the 1920s and 1930s, and the presence of intellectuals like Fals-Borda who were actively interested in instigating the peasant movement in the 1960s. During Fals-Borda’s Participatory Action Research (PAR), the local illustrator Uliánov Chalarka, in the company of ANUC leaders and the Caribe Foundation documented oral memories about the leaders of the 1920s and 1930s to present role models for the new peasant generation. In those, women featured as protagonists for the first time. The legends of Felicita Campos, ‘the peasant woman who fought for her land,’ in the

⁷ Alejandro Reyes Posada, *Aparcería y capitalismo agrario*, Controversia 38 (Bogotá, Colombia: CINEP, 1975).

1920s, and Juana-Julia Guzmán, co-founder of the first 'peasant stronghold' called '*Baluarto Rojo de Loma Grande*', in 1918, ignited male and female revolutionary spirits.⁸

The INCORA-ANUC collaboration boosted land allocations to peasants as had never happened before – or after – in Colombian history. This windfall, however, lasted only for as long Lleras-Restrepo was president between 1966 and 1970. The *terratendientes*, in retaliation to this development, sealed a pact – the Chicoral Pact – with the following government led by Pastrana-Borrero to repress the peasant movement and modify the SAR. The '*terratendiente* coalition', a term coined by Villamil-Chaux (INCORA manager 1966-1970), refers to the agrarian counter-reform network formed by landlords, family members, and local authorities to implement the Chicoral Pact.⁹ This power bloc promoted the idea that peasant economies were enemies of rural development, and politically persecuted those who were involved in land struggles.

The *terratendiente* coalition was, therefore, an endeavour of an internally colonial character and part of a structural system of patriarchal repression and exploitation. At a micro- and local level, such repression was heavily gendered and, as the following section demonstrates, included sexual and physical violence against peasant women across the three sub-regions of study. Such gender-based violence against rural women hindered local peasant food sovereignty.

Las deshonradas y las alimentadoras: Gender-based Violences as Colonial Legacies

Peasant women's memories recount the oppression exercised by *terratendientes* and authorities under their influence long before the Chicoral Pact. The *terratendiente* circles abused women and peasantries as much as they abused the territory and Nature itself. This is a colonial legacy which decolonial Latin

⁸ Ulianov Chalarka, "Felicitas Campos (Sucre): la mujer campesina en lucha por la tierra," in *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*, ed. Fundación Punta de Lanza, Bogotá and Fundación Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Montería (Montería, Córdoba, Colombia: Fundación del Sinú. Apartado Aereo 479. Montería, 1985), 70–85; Juan Camilo Díaz M, "Juana Julia Guzmán: sembrando la lucha por la tierra," *Revista Izquierda*, September 2010.

⁹ Villamil Chaux, *La reforma agraria del Frente Nacional*.

American scholars call coloniality or internal colonialism.¹⁰ During the period of colonial Spanish rule, indigenous people were considered '*naturales*' – part of the regime's idea of 'Nature' as the opposite of the empire which by contrast represented 'civilization'.¹¹ This allowed the enslavement of both human beings and Nature under capitalist relations, considering them as private property, prompting their 'cheapening', domination and mistreatment.¹² The contrast of this differentiated treatment of the subaltern was especially visible with women: while white women were considered pure and fragile, peasant women – non-white, of mixed heritage, indigenous and/or black – were constructed as lascivious and strong enough to take on hard work loads.¹³ These misguided ideas have survived beyond the independence period. The creoles' hesitation in agreeing to free enslaved Afro-descendants during the independence struggles demonstrates that colonial thinking continued to permeate their liberal values – maintaining the established racial/colonial 'matrix of power' even after the Spaniards' withdrawal.¹⁴ Such internal colonialism was still prominent in the middle of the twentieth century, mediating the relation between peasantry, rural women and *terrateniente* landlords. Patriarchalism as colonial legacy was, and still is, also a manifestation of internal colonialism within the Colombian society.¹⁵ This chapter argues however that there is evidence of patriarchy in both peasantries and *terratenientes*.

Hispanic culture and the Catholic Church left a strong patriarchal imprint at every societal level in their more traditional foundational towns, mostly located in cold and temperate climates such as the Santurbán and Coffee regions. These patriarchal legacies of colonial power structures were joined and

¹⁰ The 'decoloniality line' led by Mignolo and others, based on Quijano's work. Another more radical line is represented by Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui who used the expression 'internal colonialism' – a reference to González-Casanova's work from 1965. See: Quijano, "Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in Latin America"; Walter D. Mignolo, "Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of de-Coloniality," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 2007): 449–514; Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*.; Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*; Rivera Cusicanqui, *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa*, 2010; Gonzalez Casanova, "Internal Colonialism and National Development."

¹¹ Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene?*

¹² Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (London New York: Verso, 2020).

¹³ Lugones, "Colonialidad y género: hacia un feminismo descolonial."

¹⁴ Melo, *Historia mínima de Colombia*

The 'matrix of power' or of coloniality of power form: Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*.

¹⁵ Walter Mignolo et al., eds., *Género y descolonialidad, pensamiento crítico y opción descolonial* (Buenos Aires, Argentina: Ediciones del Signo and Globalization and the Humanities Project (Duke University), 2008).

sometimes reinforced by indigenous ‘ancestral patriarchy’, creating ‘patriarchal allyship’ with Hispanic legacies and structures.¹⁶ The implication of this patriarchal allyship is that, throughout the hegemonic masculinities widely critiqued in this chapter, there are also hegemonic femininities characterised by the cultural assignment of ‘appropriate’ roles and behaviours for women. This was particularly observed in relation to food and land within the peasantries studied. Women's role in peasant societies was pre-defined both by romantic idealisation – as of land, coffee, and life itself – and the imposition of stigmas, and women were ‘educated’ to be submissive towards fathers, husbands and patrons. Evidence from the case studies reveals many stories of *deshonradas* (dishonoured women) and *alimentadoras* (dinner ladies for coffee-pickers). This evidence advances an argument in favour of a feminist food sovereignty. However, feminist peasant struggles remain to be addressed by Colombian peasants who, influenced by a legacy of patriarchal dogmas, still underestimate women.

In the 1960 and 1970s, women who challenged such boundaries of appropriate ‘womanhood’ in their own actions, or whose treatment by male authorities placed them beyond such boundaries, were quickly denigrated in the eyes of the community. Landlords saw women as subordinate to their will, but frequently depicted women as being complicit in their sexual assaults, constructing them as ‘tricky and seductive’ and therefore guilty of their own ‘dishonour’.¹⁷ The woman was suspected of having instigated – or at least consented – to the encounter, which put the actual victims on trial for their ‘dubious moral behaviour’.¹⁸ The peasant testimonies captured by this research suggest that even within the family, the paternal figure – father or husband – represented unquestionable order and authority, but also protection. Some women interviewed for this research married when they were girls to flee their

¹⁶ *Entronque patriarcal* is the original expression used by the Xinka community feminist Lorena Cabnal in an interview with Gargallo in Guatemala in 2011. Francesca Gargallo Celentani, *Feminismos desde Abya Yala: Ideas y proposiciones de las mujeres de 607 pueblos en nuestra América*, Primera edición digital (Ciudad de México: Editorial Corte y Confección, 2014).

¹⁷ As demonstrated by Márquez in the study of sexual attacks and law practice in rural areas of Colombia: José Wilson Márquez Estrada, “Delitos sexuales y práctica judicial en Colombia: 1870-1900. Los casos de Bolívar, Antioquia y Santander,” *Palobra* 13 (August 15, 2013): 30–49.

¹⁸ Márquez studied coincidentally cases close to those in this study: Bolívar, which covers part of Los Montes de María, Santander which covers part of Santurbán and Antioquia, cradle of the migrations that originated the Coffee Axis. See: Márquez Estrada.

homes in the 1960s and 1970s, as soon as they were able to conceive, mainly due to mistreatment received from their own parents. Women therefore exchanged one oppressive male authority for another, displaying circumscribed agency in their attempts to socially navigate their positions of subordination to find the most survivable or manageable forms of control. This has been framed as a patriarchal bargain or emancipatory paradox, and from the peasant perspective it seems to be a form of choosing between different forms of subordination.¹⁹

Poverty and the absence of land rights guaranteeing access to land, water and natural spaces made peasants in general, but women and girls in particular, highly vulnerable individuals. Histories of structural gender inequality and patriarchal/*machismo* cultures, combined with hierarchical social structures and weak justice systems, meant that rich *terratenientes* were able to avoid prosecution in sexual assault cases. A concrete example of the *terratenientes'* misuse of privileges was their exemption from parental responsibility for any children born from a sexual assault, thanks to friendships with, or bribes to, municipal judges.²⁰ Sexually abused peasant women were marked as dishonoured, which forced them to undertake precarious, hard and unpaid work, often under increased risk of new rapes leading to risky pregnancies or even deaths from complicated childbirths. Health services for women in rural areas in the 1970s were limited, and this coupled with a high fertility rate meant there was little pre- and ante-natal care, further increasing the risks of pregnancy.²¹ Narrations of *terrateniente* abuse upon peasant women were recorded from testimonies collected mostly from Santurbán; however, beyond peasant memories the available documentation and literature about this topic is scarce.²²

The testimonies collected by this research also unveiled hints of patriarchal language used unwittingly by the same peasant women providing

¹⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (September 1988): 274–90; Hoineilhing Sitlhou, "Patriarchal Bargains and Paradoxical Emancipation: Issues in the Politics of Land Rights of Kuki Women," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 22, no. 1 (February 2015): 92–115.

²⁰ *Memories of Participant No.91*.

²¹ Louis Joseph Lebret, *Estudio sobre las condiciones del desarrollo de Colombia, Atlas*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Bogotá, Colombia: Aedita Editores, 1958).

²² *Memories of Participant No.90 Anonymous (Interview 64), Santurbán*, Recording (Corregimiento de Berlín, Tona, Colombia, 2019), 9; *Memories of Participant No.91*.

these accounts. As such, for instance, it was women who 'became pregnant', or men who 'gave children to them', as if they were presenting their seed as a gift and the children were to only belong to the women. These narratives evidence how deeply patriarchal practices lay in the hearts of peasant households in the 1960 and 1970s. Girls were held in the kitchen with their mothers, and if sent to school, they were kept away from boys. Once at home they worked in service of their parents and brothers. This was as true for peasant girls as for women in *terratenientes*' families, as the 'good landlord' microhistory reviewed later in this section demonstrates. Those female participants in this research who married under eighteen in order to be able to leave their parental homes, recognised that married life has or had been just a continuation of those highly-gendered asymmetric relationships.

This is not only the case in Santurbán; peasant women from Los Montes de María and the Coffee Axis recalled other such experiences. Through my research, I came across a woman who had left school as a child to work in the family kitchen whenever their mother was absent.²³ Another peasant woman who married at eleven after a whipping by her father feels that she missed her youth.²⁴ Another testimony was offered by a woman who was denied any type of education, merely because she was a woman, so as a form of rebellion she taught herself to read and write and left home "as soon as she learned to write a letter to her boyfriend".²⁵ These narrations unveil patriarchal domination as a colonial legacy. Patriarchal restrictions around women's access to education and alienation from the land demonstrate control over their bodies. Patriarchal domination, as suggested by Lugones, creates dependency, and once the subalterns are dependent, they need the patriarchal figure to survive.²⁶ However, these testimonies also evidence that rural women performed their own personal disobediences and built resistance against such patriarchal, colonial domination. Although they could not escape their realities, they

²³ *Memories of Participant No.3.*

²⁴ According to the Colombian law, minors could be married with the consent of their parents and minimum age was not regulated at the time, which demonstrates a wider point about national legal protections not being available to women then. Consejo Nacional Legislativo, "Código Civil Colombiano," Ley 57 de 1887 § (1887); *Memories of Participant No.22.*

²⁵ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 69, 70 (Collective Interview), Los Montes de María, Recording* (San Juan de Nepomuceno, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).

²⁶ Lugones elaborated this reflection based on a work by Allen: Lugones, "Colonialidad y género: hacia un feminismo descolonial"; Paula G Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

nevertheless made brave efforts to transform them and, as such, they also became agents of food sovereignty as an emancipatory concept.

Just as peasant women's rights were and are fundamental to food sovereignty, so *terratendientes* and their government allies were not only agents of counter-reform and also patriarchal and colonialist structures of power linked to food insecurity and various violences contravening the rights of peasants. Furthermore, a structural patriarchy within the same peasantries prevented them from achieving food sovereignty by underestimating the full women's potential and limiting their roles to growing, cooking and providing food. Peasant women showing resistance as individuals did not disrupt a family's food security. On the contrary, they conquered spaces usually reserved by men as landowners, farmers or peasant leaders, whilst retaining and dignifying their food provisioning roles to ensure food sovereignty. Empowered peasant women then re-signified and actually retained their socially-imposed gender roles. Their struggles prioritised peasant rights over liberal feminist demands.²⁷

The connection between peasant emancipation and food sovereignty is key, since food sovereignty is not merely about peasants' food provisioning, but a declaration of collective rights led by transnational social movements. Essentially, food sovereignty incorporates within a single framework peasant rights, rural women's rights, food rights and Nature's rights, none of which have been granted but rather repressed by political and legal means.²⁸ In contrast, although the four dimensions of food security – access, availability, utilisation and stability – are granted mostly by women, food security as a concept is based on indicators whose measurements do not account for injustices and subjugations, even to serfdoms behind the food systems. In other words, these testimonies demonstrate the tensions between the constructs of food security and food sovereignty from a gender perspective. They unveil some of the hidden costs of food security in some poor rural households, which in these cases seem to be channelled into externalised costs subsidised by the unpaid labour of women and girls. Patriarchal institutions, from large scale ones such as estates to smaller ones such as families, negated women's voices and agency. Historical evidence indicates it had required years – and generations –

²⁷ Fieldwork observation

²⁸ Robin Dunford, "Human Rights and Collective Emancipation: The Politics of Food Sovereignty," *Review of International Studies* 41, no. 2 (April 2015): 239–61.

of self-empowerment and activism for local peasant movements to build towards a consistent food sovereignty where women were extensively valued. As long as women's rights were not fulfilled, any food sovereignty was incomplete; the same should apply to Nature's rights.

The first Nyéléni declaration on food sovereignty, published in 2007, included the fulfilment of peasants' rights and women's rights, and the imperative to 'work with' Nature. However, from Latin American decolonial perspectives, the recognition of Nature as a living entity with special rights is also implicit within the food sovereignty framework.²⁹ Food sovereignty involves rural women's emancipation as a key indicator of peasantry emancipation. It understands Nature as more than means of production and invites us to rethink agri-food culture, seeing it as a form of care giving. In the light of a historical contempt for peasant women's right, gendering the struggle for food sovereignty now implies recognition of the agency exercised by peasant women who willingly assume those roles previously assigned to them under patriarchal structures, such as managing the *pancoger* plots, but by their own personal determination rather than by imposition. Therefore, feeding and caring as activities currently performed by peasant women in pursuit of food sovereignty would not be submissive acts, but could rather be interpreted as 'subversive acts': to "make of every piece of cultivated land a fertiliser for thoughts".³⁰

This was not the case, however, by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, when not only was there a strong tradition of colonial subjugation of women but also women's occupational profiling started to be promoted by institutions such as higher education institutions and FEDECAFÉ. This came as part of the training included in the SAR; while rural men were formed to be agronomists, forestry experts and water scientists, rural women were enrolled in studies related to unpaid responsibilities already assigned to them, such as home economy and food preparation.³¹ Similarly, FEDECAFÉ, as part of its

²⁹ Gabriela Pinheiro Machado Brochner, "Food Sovereignty in Latin America: A Gendered and Multiscale Perspective," *Alternautas* 5, no. 1 (July 2018): 82–97; Isabella Giunta, "Food Sovereignty in Ecuador: Peasant Struggles and the Challenge of Institutionalization," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 1201–24; Millner, "The Right to Food Is Nature Too."

³⁰ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Més enllà del dolor i del folklore*, Programa d'Estudis Independents (PEI) (Barcelona, España: Museu D'Art Contemporani, 2017), www.youtube.com/watch?v=cU5ZEIEE0jw.

³¹ República de Colombia, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1961* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1962).

education campaign following their 1971 national congress, formulated educational modules separated by gender. The programmes for men were focused on agriculture, farm administration, marketing and credit management, while for women the modules related to being good housewives, home administration or family wellbeing.³² In sum, in the coffee region, the rural education provided for women led to continued situations of self-exploitation and sacrifice.

In coffee farms, the harvests required a substantial amount of manual labour, and on bigger farms either peasant-administrators or farm owners were responsible for feeding the workers, who were sometimes their own neighbours. This role normally used to be – and still is – assumed by their wives, which earned these women the name of *alimentadoras*.³³ Again, the weight of food security, in relation to granting a regular good food with safety/hygienic standards, fell entirely on unpaid women's shoulders. No-one kept account of how many hours they worked and each day they got up extremely early and stayed awake until late, making sure everything was ready for the next day. They were responsible for fuelling the firewood ovens, overseeing stocks and food, and even household finances, but never managed their own money for personal purposes.³⁴ They were entirely economically dependent on their partners. These peasant women were additionally heavily exposed to health risks from occupational-related diseases. Several studies have linked the prevalence of chronic obstructive lung diseases in rural women with the use of the firewood ovens that *alimentadoras*' lives revolved around.³⁵

Rural women's narratives captured in this thesis' research, however, suggest that a reconsideration is needed of the apparent black and white dualism here exposed between *terratenientes* and peasants: colonialist oppressors against oppressed victim. Internal colonialism, as well as the cultural *mestizaje* (mixed ethnic culture), has been rather internalised in the

³² García Rodríguez, *Élites y poder en la economía cafetera*.

³³ *Memories of Participants No. 4, 5 (Collective Interview)*.

³⁴ This testimony was provided by a male peasant, a tenant administrator, and shows that sometimes women manage part of the 'family income': *Memories of Participant No.33*.

³⁵ Rodolfo J. Dennis, "Exposición a humo de leña y riesgo de enfermedad pulmonar obstructiva en mujeres," *Medicina* 17, no. 1 (April 9, 1995): 6–12; Andrea Juneman and Gabriela Legarreta, "Inhalación de humo de leña: una causa relevante pero poco reconocida de Enfermedad Pulmonar Obstructiva Crónica," *Revista Americana de Medicina Respiratoria* 7, no. 2 (2007): 21–57; Diana M. Palacios and Odilio Méndez, "Neumopatía por humo de leña: un estudio en autopsias," *Biomédica* 18, no. 2 (1998): 153–60.

Colombian peasantries, being present both in the oppressed peasants' behaviour as well as in the oppressors'. This is particularly true in the highlands where Spanish colonial settlement has left strong cultural legacies, leading to male peasants reproducing colonial patterns of the exercise of power and domination upon women and Nature. This is why peasant women's current struggles are organised around native seeds, territoriality and care of Nature.³⁶

Another false dichotomy which is not easy to avoid when historicizing food sovereignty in Colombia is the 'good-peasant versus evil-*terrateniente*' narrative. As well as peasants who took decisions which they now regret because of the environmental damage they caused, there were also landlords who, within their colonial and patriarchal ways, took decisions to benefit the peasantries associated to them. The most salient example discovered in the present thesis' fieldwork is the microhistory of the 'father' of Altos de la Mina community. This case is not only fascinating on its own, but also illustrates the dynamics of paternalist and benevolent agrarian institutions that, in contrast with the *terrateniente* oppression, provided generously for peasants. This microhistory is highly relevant because it is more than an exception to the rule; it reflects the friendly approach to the peasant issue adopted by agrarian elites grouped in the Federations as FEDECAFÉ. This approach, as will be seen in the following chapter, was not exclusive to FEDECAFÉ and the coffee region but, in general, could be reflected in all the agricultural guilds in Colombia. These good landlords exercised their influence in such a paternal way that they remained unchallenged by subalterns until very recently.

The Good Landlord

His name was Álvaro Hernández. He was the father of the whole village ... Thanks to that man we raised children well. The harmony in the village is due to him. Those Christmases that man offered! He just died and it has been very hard for us, he was such a Master in this village.³⁷

³⁶ ANZORC, "Manifiesto de las mujeres de Las Zonas de Reserva Campesina (ZRC)" (Asociación Nacional de Reservas Campesinas ANZORC, January 29, 2020), ANZORC, anzorc.com; Yusmidia Solano Suárez, *Regionalización y movimiento de mujeres: procesos en el Caribe Colombiano* (Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2017); Hildahl et al., *Mujeres de los páramos*.

³⁷ *Memories of Participant No.25 Anonymous (Interview 18), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Altos de la Mina, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).

In the *Caldense* mountains, close to Chinchiná, lies the *vereda* (village) 'Alto de la Mina' which, according to one interviewee, is 'an oasis' of peace in a very conflicted countryside. Here, every old man and woman refers to one single man as 'our dad'. Álvaro Hernandez -'Don Álvaro' - represents the ideal figure of the pater familias, a strong but benevolent head of the household, loved and obeyed by men and women willingly under his domination and protection.³⁸ At the same time his is a microhistory which serves as an example of the benevolent landlord. This is a counter-example of a landlord who never showed anti-peasant behaviour but was mostly a benefactor, yet still exhibits the hegemonic masculinity of the *terrateniente* role. Don Álvaro's microhistory follows the cultural norms of upper-class, Catholic, landlord masculinity. According to local memory, he was raised a local rich boy, inherited a prosperous coffee farm early in his youth, then held a high position in the coffee Federation. He enjoyed the coffee pact years' bonanza and used it to increase his fortune, build the parish, and transform for better the lives of its inhabitants. Many elders in Altos de la Mina affirm that they are pensioned thanks to him, which is highly uncommon for Colombian peasantry. He also gave them small properties of his lands. In general, the Altos de la Mina's peasantry had enjoyed a good standard of living. He never married; his workers and the village people were viewed as his children. However, women in his family, in the meantime, lived in his shadow.³⁹ His three sisters were educated in nearby urban areas, without anywhere near the attention their father afforded their brother. He was the only sibling to attend university, graduating with the first cohort of Agronomists from the University of Caldas in the 1940s. As soon as he graduated, the coffee elites asked him to join the Federation, offering him an important position which granted him access to the latest developments, until he retired with a good pension.⁴⁰

³⁸ Raewyn Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press in association with B. Blackwell, 1987).

³⁹ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 20, 21 (Collective Interview), Eje Cafetero, Recording* (Altos de la Mina, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.24 Anonymous (Interview 17), Eje Cafetero, Recording* (Altos de la Mina, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.25; Memories of Participant No.26 Anonymous (Interview 19), Eje Cafetero, Recording* (Altos de la Mina, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).

⁴⁰ *Memories of Participant No.30 César Augusto Gómez Hernández.*

On Antioqueño-Caldas colonisation, gUAQUERÍA and road fondas see: Parsons, Antioqueño Colonization; Morales Benitez, Testimonio de un pueblo: interpretación económico-social de la colonización de Antioquia en Caldas - La fundación de Manizales; Valencia Llano,

Don Álvaro inherited his family farm, *El Sinaí* at a very young age because his father died prematurely. During the ‘bonanza’, he was not only able to buy and accumulate many lands, he was also a member of all the clubs and associations and led many initiatives investing his own money generously in public works, donated land to schools and playgrounds, and paved roads with his own dump trucks. He brought people from poorer towns to work in harvest seasons, helped peasants to build their houses, providing them with land and aid, and managed to obtain pensions for several of his workers, holding inclusive Christmas parties buying gifts for everyone in the town, man, woman and child. His tone was authoritarian and bossy, he never accepted suggestions, and he was an extremely generous and benevolent but authoritarian patriarch. However, after the coffee pact broke in 1989, international prices fell sharply and Don Álvaro suffered in the recession alongside coffee growers everywhere else. When the so-called ‘coffee crisis’ started, Don Álvaro had to start selling property, farms and land in several municipalities. Eventually, he also had to sell his familial farm piece by piece. However, he always held on to the farmhouse. In its last years of vitality, *El Sinaí* survived thanks to coffee tourism, as did other coffee farms in the Axis.⁴¹

The subordination to the patriarchal authority of Don Álvaro included his sisters. Lacking any resources of their own despite belonging to a wealthy family, the Hernández-García sisters had limited choices in their lives. One of them, for instance, suffered a significant decline in her health and the other had to assume the role of unpaid care-giver while they were still also performing occasional work for the coffee hacienda, which was also unpaid. Amid the exceptional growth of the coffee business and the sudden collapse which followed, the heritage of the Hernández-García sisters was lost along the way, since all the patrimony was managed – and for practical purposes tenured – by their brother. Small unpaid works included the organisation and logistics behind festivities and parties for the coffee workers of *El Sinaí* and their peasant settlement. At Christmas, when there were gifts for everyone, there were none

Colonización; Ángel María Ocampo Cardona, *Paisajes inexplorados de la historia caldense*, Obras Históricas 12 (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia: Editorial Manigraf, 2015).

⁴¹ César Gómez Hernández, “El capi de nuevo en el aire” (Book of Memories, Chinchiná, Caldas, Colombia, 2017); *Memories of Participant No.30*; “Sociedad de Mejoras Públicas de Santa Rosa de Cabal,” Institutional, accessed March 4, 2020, <https://sites.google.com/site/smpsantarosadecabal/>.

for Álvaro's relatives. On the contrary, they were expected to prepare and host the celebrations.⁴²

In sum Don Álvaro made the best of his money and good fortune to help others, despite refusing to consider any changes or different opinions and perspectives beyond his own ruling, not even taking into account his sisters' rights or feelings. According to the family, neither they nor the peasants surrounding him showed interest in defying his authority. Don Álvaro's story, as a small-scale model of the story of the coffee elites who form the Federation, demonstrates the standard of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal control which dominated the coffee sector comfortably during the 'bonanza'. The subordinated coffee family, as with the Altos de la Mina peasants, comprised many layers of beneficiaries of the ICA. They seemed to be happily passive beneficiaries of their dependency, as if their wellbeing left no room for agency. One interpretation of this would be that protectionism and price control acted almost as an effective agrarian reform in practice, supporting peasantries through stable landownership and the coffee market. There was no need for peasant opposition because they felt prosperous rather than oppressed. *El Sinaí* provides the most salient evidence, however, of how a hegemonic patriarchal institution such as the coffee Federation left aside the most vulnerable actors – women and Nature – and took decisions without considering how they would be impacted. Certainly, the ambition of the coffee growers to maximise revenues from the 'bonanza' drove the coffee deforestation that will be reviewed in the following chapter.

Recalling the argument made in the previous chapter that the ICA acted as an agrarian reform, it must be added that the Federation, internally colonial and hegemonic-patriarchal institution such as it was, was instrumental in delivering the pact's benefits to its subordinates at many levels. The relatively good living standards enjoyed during the time the pact was in force probably would not have been possible without FEDECAFÉ's facilitation, just as Alto de la Mina's progress was facilitated by its 'good landlord'. FEDECAFÉ, however, also helped sustain gender inequalities and patriarchal control; it is important to note that these 'good times' were due not to these inequalities but, as reviewed

⁴² *Memories of Participant No.30; Memories of Participant No.30 César Augusto Gómez Hernández (Interview 74), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Chinchiná, Caldas, Colombia, 2020).*

in the previous chapter, to the bonanza created by the ICA and the lower Brazilian coffee production. Once the pact was gone, the paternalist institution endured but the sector fell into a state of permanent crisis.

At this point the Alto de la Mina case diverges from the rest of the coffee sector. After the pact was broken in 1989, the crisis intensely impacted the coffee growing peasantry. Don Álvaro limited his and his families' own wealth and security to maintain the living conditions of peasants he considered to be his responsibility. The coffee elites kept their status and power and consolidated the dependency of coffee growers on them, and the worst of the recession was suffered by the small and medium affiliates.

The Colombian coffee sector has been and still is ruled by a group of patriarchal landlords: the coffee Federation whose entire senior management is composed of white men. In the so-called coffee family – as with the Hernández sisters – the coffee women remained reduced to certain roles such as *chapoleras* (collectors), *tabloneras* (administrator assistance) and *alimentadoras* – still subordinated to the 'good fathers' of the village.⁴³ This pattern of patriarchal domination and exploitation of women and Nature throughout these years explains, in part, the magnitude of the 1980s' coffee deforestation which was prompted by the Green Revolution and the profit hunger which drove it, as will be explored in the next chapter.

In other regions there was also evidence of the existence of good landlords. In Los Montes de María local populations differentiate between *terratenientes* and rich peasants. The rich peasant is still part of the peasantry and the cultural and social relations built within the community, such as the bilateral support in each other's farm work, the food exchange and the generosity, and under those circumstances they express no sense of envy or resentment. In Santurbán, those wheat farmers who offered their threshing parties were generally landowners and families helping each other. Not all landowners had the patriarchal *terrateniente* mentality here discussed. Many

⁴³ José Chalarca, *El café en la vida de Colombia* (Bogotá, Colombia: Federación Nacional de Cafeteros, 1987); León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017*; Fidel H. Cuéllar Boada, *El crédito cafetero en Colombia: economía, instituciones y política, 1920-2002*, 1. ed (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas : Universidad de los Andes, Facultad Administración, 2004); Saldías Barreneche and Jaramillo Cardona, "40 años del servicio de extensión"; Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos generales del café*.

peasants were and are owners of their lands, and those who are not, aspire to be; some also could rent a part of their property to someone in the family or a friend so they would be their landlords, and yet, in none of those cases would those peasants be considered *terratenientes*. This distinction will be useful later in this chapter for comprehending the *terrateniente* coalition behaviour.

These first two sections have made two things clear. First, that the paternal benevolent forms of food security have heavily relied upon neglecting rural women's rights, which in turn, inhibits food sovereignty. Second, that the *terrateniente* concept suggests more than a large landlord. It refers to someone exercising colonial and patriarchal power, domination and oppression towards peasants, Nature and women, not only through land tenancy and accumulation but also through influencing local authorities. I have additionally reflected upon the colonial thinking permeating peasantries which is evident in the deterioration of the Nature care that will be studied in the next chapter, but here the neglect of women's rights has been emphasised.

In sum, women's roles in food provisioning were not properly recognised in the 1970s, neither by benevolent paternalistic or oppressive *terratenientes* nor by men of the same peasantries. However, women's knowledge was essential to food sovereignty. Currently, peasant women defend their labour as carers and protectors of seeds, Nature and clean production as a space of emancipation and resistance. In the 1970s it was the wisdom and strength of a previous generation of peasant women who preserved various cultural traditions and knowledge, not necessarily in written words but as memories and practices, as the following section reviews.

Nature Literacy: Rural Women's Role in Food Sovereignty



Image 7. Petrona Monterrosa Peñafiel playing the carángano.⁴⁴

The *Montemariana* peasant in the photograph, Petrona Monterrosa-Peñafiel, appears here playing the *carángano*. This image belongs to the album *Los Maestros y Juglares de Los Montes de María* (Masters and Bards from Los Montes de Maria), which compiles local folk songs and showcases some of the melodies which were used to communicate messages between farms, and were still in use in the 1960-70s Afropeasant agriculture. Petrona, according to the album information, is one of the few people who still remembers and teaches the art of communication by *carángano*, an instrument that is composed of a soundboard, a handle and a single string, and which produces different notes and rhythms with different meanings mostly related with the coordination of collaborative agrarian tasks. Thus, in the twentieth century *Montemariano* peasant culture – and more recently in Santurbán too – the older wise-women have been bestowed by communities with special social positions: women preserving and teaching memory, ancestral knowledge, art, food production,

⁴⁴ Rafael Ramos Caraballo, *Petrona Monterrosa Peñafiel - San Antonio Del Palmito, Sucre*, 2018, Photograph in the Album *Maestros y Juglares de los Montes de María*, 12x4cm, 2018.

landscape management, traditional cooking and use of medicinal herbs, among other strengths.

Out of the testimonies collected for the purposes of this research, at least 36 speak of wise grandmothers and mothers rather than grandfathers or fathers when they refer to food sovereignty and food history. Some mentioned that these wise and caring women did not know how to read or write; in other words, their knowledge was mostly related to traditional recipes, essential care based on medicinal plants, and farm administration (except relating to cash crops where male peasants were normally in charge). Their wisdom, therefore, usually resulted from their power to understand Nature and to administer the farm and its resources, as well as knowing how to better serve and help other people. This is similar to the notion of women's relevance within the food sovereignty framework.

Western science has coined the terms 'environmental literacy' and 'ecoliteracy' to refer to formal education in environmentalism and the use of ecosystemic knowledge in building sustainable communities, respectively.⁴⁵ Drawing on those concepts but using a more practical language closer to the peasants' own, this thesis suggests that these rural women possess an empirical form of Nature literacy. In an epistemological sense, this offers a peasant equivalent of what Ingersoll calls 'oceanic literacy' which signifies an indigenous ability to 'read' Nature, seas, plants, winds or weather.⁴⁶ This peasant Nature literacy, according to peasants' own testimony, is a product of immersion and involvement in peasant methods of engaging with land and Nature, and is analogous to indigenous environmental knowledge and survival skills acquired after generations of the same families inhabiting the same territories.⁴⁷ Interviews conducted for the purposes of this research suggest that wise-women who mastered Nature literacy could and can: know the natural

⁴⁵ Roland W. Scholz and Claudia R. Binder, *Environmental Literacy in Science and Society: From Knowledge to Decisions* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); B. B. McBride et al., "Environmental Literacy, Ecological Literacy, Ecoliteracy: What Do We Mean and How Did We Get Here?," *Ecosphere* 4, no. 5 (May 2013): art67; Volkan Kaya and Doris Elster, "A Critical Consideration of Environmental Literacy: Concepts, Contexts, and Competencies," *Sustainability* 11, no. 6 (March 15, 2019): 1581.

⁴⁶ Karin E. Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁴⁷ Peasantries collaborating with this research are not considered by the state in Colombia as indigenous peasants. 'Indigenous' in Colombia, is a term reserved for indigenous tribes which are pre-Columbus and preserve their own language.

cycles for crops, the biodiversity of their environment and its benefits (animals, medicinal plants); care for the sick using local resources, including serving as midwives or even doctors in the absence of one; exercise efficiency and precision in the administration of natural resources including firewood, food and water; forecast or know in detail the seasonal weather patterns such as rainy seasons, droughts, *canícula* (hot months) or hunger months; be guardians of traditional recipes and/or custodians of the local food culture, including being native seed savers and keepers of local agricultural knowledge; and – without having any formal education in ecology or biology – develop appropriate ecosystem management or ecological practices.⁴⁸ These levels of balanced metabolism between societies and their territory cannot be achieved without food sovereignty or without Nature-literate peasants, such as these wise elder women.⁴⁹

An outstanding example of Nature literacy is the lowland grandmothers' practice of using abandoned termite mounds as stoves, as illustrated in image 8. These fascinating stoves, called *bindes* in Caribbean Colombia, have been documented in other parts of South America and Africa.⁵⁰ This testimony collected during this thesis' fieldwork provides a good example:

My grandmother was a wise woman and organised, without school... she did not like fires... did not use chemicals, or burned... sowed all legumes to strengthen the soil... animals had to be fairly treated as well as people... She used everything, in her farm everything was found, there was *totumo* (calabash fruit) for the *totumas* (calabash vessel) used for the bath, for coffee, as plates, small *totumitas* to drink water, or use as spoons... when we were ill, we were cured with plants... she did the accounts in her head... wasted nothing... rubbish was no problem, everything then was bio...⁵¹

⁴⁸ This type of environmental wisdom may become useful with the current climate crisis. For example, contemporary debates on environmental sciences have raised discussions about designing urban ecosystems as 'wetland cities' and 'amphibious cities', which in fact resemble the old 'amphibious peoples' and '*hicatea-men/hicatea-women*' mentioned in previous chapters, and that have existed for centuries in such cultures as Sinú.

⁴⁹ Scholz and Binder, *Environmental Literacy in Science and Society*; McBride et al., "Environmental Literacy, Ecological Literacy, Ecoliteracy"; Ingersoll, *Waves of Knowing*.

⁵⁰ Yoleida Esther Sandoval Monterroza and Naimer Madera Covo, "El Binde: fogón costeño donde cocinamos ideas etnomatemáticas" (Thesis in Education, Universidad Santo Tomás, 2021); Ximena S. Villagran et al., "Virtual Micromorphology: The Application of Micro-CT Scanning for the Identification of Termite Mounds in Archaeological Sediments," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 24 (April 2019): 785–95.

⁵¹ *Memories of Participant No.72*.



Image 8. Photo of a drawing of stoves made from termite mounds. Termite nests used as ovens of different sizes, the door in front used to put fire logs and the actual flames comes from the top, focusing the heat on the pots. Drawing by Catalina Pérez on the fieldwork notes⁵²

During fieldwork, I met some well-recognised wise-women, as well as less visible women, identifying in all cases their culture of woman-to-woman knowledge transfer, but also the barriers they faced to access the world of formal education dominated by men. Although today rural women's organisations are proliferating and they enjoy more autonomy and decision-making roles, this was not the case in the 1970s, not even for the most well-known women leaders. While rural women's rights, practices, knowledges and strength have been key to food sovereignty, the patriarchal foundation of peasant organisation at the time limited the contributions that women could make, and only in very few cases could they break the mould and breach those spaces reserved for men, such as public speaking or formal representation within political organisations.

One space which remained firmly forbidden to women was the decision-making board. Solano affirms that in the 1970s Caribbean peasantries were full of *mujeres matronas y machistas empollerados*: women with 'domestic power' and males with affective dependency (insecure and attached).⁵³ Correa and the CNMH researchers went further revising these identities in the Los Montes de

⁵² Catalina Pérez Pérez, *Nidos vacíos del comején*, May 24, 2019, Drawing on Paper (Fieldwork Notes), 21.5x10 cm, May 24, 2019.

⁵³ Solano Suárez, *Regionalización y movimiento de mujeres*.

María ANUC branch arguing that it took form through the female vanguard front and the male decision-making board.⁵⁴

'Las roba-tierras': Rural Women's Role in the 1970s Agrarian Reform

This section focuses on the development and formalisation of Colombian peasant activism with the emergence of national peasant organisation in opposition to *terratiente* counter-reform. It analyses types of gendered violence experience by and roles assigned to women by the peasant movement to explore transitions towards women's participation and agency, as well as their instrumentalisation among persistent forms of subordination to patriarchal authorities at different levels.

In this decade, the largest peasant movement to have existed in Colombia, the Association of Peasant Users (ANUC), was born, developed and strengthened, before being weakened and repressed in a backlash from the *terratiente* coalition, as well as divided by the government and by several left-wing groups. This section starts by reviewing women's importance in the peasant organisation, from those who played an active role in ANUC's involvement in land occupations to those who silently accepted their husbands' decisions but secretly disagreed with radical actions taken by them. Following a chronological order, ANUC's rise, activities and fall will be approached from the point of view of women who experienced them, and contrast provided with the orthodox male peasant leaders' narratives, to provide a gendered analysis of the impact of the counter-reform on food sovereignty and peasants' rights. This section will provide new insights into land occupations that have been well documented in existing literatures by including the perspectives of women.

ANUC was created by the Decree 755 of 1967 and resolution 061 of 1968, and obtained its legal status through resolution 649 of 1970 of the Ministry of Agriculture.⁵⁵ Being careful about the language used – and avoiding

⁵⁴ Hernán Darío Correa and CNRR, eds., "Las mujeres: de la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones," in *La tierra en disputa: memorias de despojo y resistencia campesina en la Costa Caribe, 1960-2010*, Primera edición en Colombia, Pensamiento (Bogotá, Colombia: Taurus, 2010), 291–391.

⁵⁵ Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Decree 755/1967; Ministry of Agriculture, "Resolution 061/1968" (1968); Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

the term 'peasant' – the government constituted it under the figure of a state entity where peasants were assigned the role of agrarian reform 'users', as if they were passive beneficiaries. However, behind the formalities, what President Lleras-Restrepo had in mind – as his intervention to peasants demonstrated – was, on the contrary, a call to action:

It is an essential aspect of the reform, that those peasants who have spent years and years working in foreign land shall become owners. We can no longer continue living a time of lords above decreeing, and people below obeying... we need the living presence of the people in national life, making their aspirations felt.⁵⁶

These words, addressed to the first 'users' in Sincelejo, Sucre in 1967, would be repeated several times by the government inviting ANUC to exert pressure, which they did through the exercise of land occupations called 'recuperations'. Even though the law also granted peasant participation through representatives on boards of different state agencies, it was the resistance of hundreds upon thousands in the territories which ultimately achieved some lands' redistribution. ANUC grew rapidly: it reached six hundred thousand members in its first year and almost one million nationally by October 1971.⁵⁷

In order to accelerate the land redistribution aspect of SAR, the Lleras government also issued the Law 1 of 1968 that enabled INCORA to expropriate owner-absent latifundia occupied by tenant peasants.⁵⁸ This, naturally, alarmed the *terratenientes*, who expelled peasants from their lands in anticipation of an INCORA visit. Therefore, 'land recuperation' strategies were implemented by peasant groups usually formed by the same evicted families and their closest friends, with the support of ANUC.⁵⁹ Knowing in advance – or informing INCORA – which estates were susceptible to expropriation, the displaced peasants organised with their ANUC colleagues, prepared some seedlings and prefabricated huts and in one single night many of them settled back in part of the farms, with crops, huts and animals and camped in those lands. The owners

⁵⁶ *Discurso Carlos Lleras - Campesinos Anuc - 1967*, Audio (Sincelejo, Sucre, 1967), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkBD869TH6s>.

⁵⁷ Díaz Callejas, *Colombia; Zamosc, The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

⁵⁸ Congress of Colombia, "Law 1/1968," Pub. L. No. 1, Diario Oficial Año CIV No. 32428 23 (1968).

⁵⁹ Reyes Posada, *Aparcería y capitalismo agrario*.

sometimes called the local police to evict them and then the peasants usually retired peacefully; however, they returned on other nights, as many times as necessary to expedite the purchase of land by INCORA. Some owners conversely donated their land to achieve peaceful agreements with the peasant occupants. Once these agreements were made, peasants brought their families and established community strongholds, or communities of temporary common property and food sovereignty, since the parcelling and individual titling processes took time.⁶⁰

The ANUC Women

In analysing the testimonies collected by this investigation, two types of female reaction to the ANUC organisation and the 'land recuperations' could be identified. In one category are the proud women who took active part in the organisation and were in the 'female front' of recuperation operations, as part of the front-line female phalanx that formed a key ANUC tactic on the assumption that state security forces would hesitate to attack women and that such exceptional women's activism would raise the profile and transmit the seriousness of the action to (inter-)national audiences.⁶¹ The other type of women did not participate directly. In this second group there were women who – while they secretly disagreed with land occupations – remained silent, so as to not antagonise their husbands. There were also wives who were not allowed to be part of those actions, in some cases because the husbands wanted – paternalistically – to protect them since they knew that women's main role was to be in the front facing the armed police. Within the small group of six *Montemariana* peasant women interviewed who had been involved with ANUC action, these categories correspond, interestingly, to single and married women respectively. This gives an indication that marital status might have indeed been a key factor in participation in land recuperations in this sample, but this trend may not hold at a wider, national level, nor even Caribbean regional level. Some of these ladies stated that they considered these actions as 'invasions', but that

⁶⁰ Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria; Memories of Participant No.58; Memories of Participant No.75 Anonymous (Interview 51), Los Montes de María*, Recording (Ovejas, Sucre, Colombia, 2019).

⁶¹ Correa and CNRR, "Las mujeres: de la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones"; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

due to their obligation of submission to their husbands they decided to not announce or defend their opinion. Both single women and girls were however present in ANUC campsites preceding major action, as stated in the transcripts of the Fals-Borda's archive on 'La Antioqueña', and further confirmed by some participants.⁶² It has been registered also by the CNMH investigations, and in ANUC leader Jesús 'Chucho' Pérez' autobiography – Chucho hereinafter – with these words:

... female participation was fundamental in the occupation of offices and entities' headquarters as INCORA's, the Sucre Government Hall and the Sincelejo Cathedral; they were also present at the roadblocks...⁶³

Peasant leader Catalina Pérez provided a vivid narration of how the ANUC's female front operated:

My sister and I were 'bad-asses' in the land occupations. When the police came, we called all women to set with us a retaining wall so that they did not take the male comrades. And if any was put on the vans then we, the women, ran along and stood side by side in front of the car. The police were not so arbitrary then, they respected us. Imagine when the police came to repress us, we began to sing the national anthem and the police stayed still. We raised the Colombian flag and the white peace flag... since then we have been fighting for peace.⁶⁴

As a current peasant leader, Catalina Pérez' testimony bridges the period from the 1970s land conflicts to the present post peace accord situation. This evidences an important argument I will explore further about women's memory narration. As wise-women and keepers of oral tradition, it seems key for them to perpetuate these storied legends of the past by 'being the legend' in the present, taking action to provide a powerful and relevant meaning to enlighten current circumstances. By contrast, the narrative of current peace discourse serves to elevate past struggles to the altruistic level of contemporary activism, by implying that when peasant leaders faced off against *terrateniente*

⁶² Orlando Fals Borda, "Hacienda 'La Antioqueña' (Baluarte Adamo). Archivo Personal Orlando Fals Borda, Transcripción relato sobre la recuperación de tierras de La Antioqueña" (Córdoba, Colombia, March 8, 1972), Caja 12 Carpeta 05 fol. 3786-3793, 3799-3831, Centro de Documentación Regional Montería, Red Cultural del Banco de la República en Colombia, Montería.

⁶³ Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*, 148.

⁶⁴ *Memories of Participant No.72*.

institutions they did it also to create a path towards peace and a cessation of conflict. It was this peace, according to this perspective, which ANUC women were preserving by protecting the men behind them.

However, not all ANUC women share this viewpoint, as an anonymous testimony collected by the CNMH verses:

In the front row? Back behind men! We never were ahead. But of course, if the army came: Women! Then they did send us forward. Grab the children, go ahead! And we had to go in front and 'take the bullet'.⁶⁵

"*Poner el pecho*" (to stick your chest out [similar to 'take the bullet']) were this woman's exact words, which means facing the risk to protect the men, sometimes even carrying children with them.

Whether they were being instrumentalised, or happily volunteering, it is established that women play a significant part and had specific roles within 1970s peasant organisation, but these were on the ground rather than in the halls of power or the boardroom. The main argument made by the CNMH's essay "*Las mujeres: De la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones*" ("Women: from land taking to decision making") was precisely that they were considered 'important' as a human shield but ignored and left 'back behind' when it came to decision making.⁶⁶ There were no women in the first ANUC national board established in 1970, and only three among 56 representatives in the second, elected in 1971.⁶⁷

In contrast with the 'ANUC women', there were 'ANUC wives', who were less visible, kept away from action and dragged from one place to another according to the husbands' commands. These two following testimonies come from the same collective interview:

Peasant woman A: Mom never agreed with those invasions... people could be killed. Sometimes the riot police were sent in... at that time they [wives] could not comment, men were the ones in charge... They [wives] kept their mouths shut and no, they did not say a thing ... Ladies stayed at home, and men left, taking a month or two, when they invaded. And then the [land]lord said yes... Then we could all go there... Dad said we are going to move, we had to take our bags and we

⁶⁵ Correa and CNRR, "Las mujeres: de la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones," 303.

⁶⁶ Correa and CNRR, "Las mujeres: de la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones."

⁶⁷ Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

followed him... they were in power, at that time the woman had to follow the man, she could not say no...

Peasant woman B: Mom was coward... she did not dare to say anything, she was very afraid of that thing... she said that suddenly they could kill my dad or us all, even though he gets his land...⁶⁸

In my literature review, I have found no evidence either in history books or published documents relating 1970s land occupations which recount testimonies like these, of those wives who would have preferred a less radical line of land struggle. However, I consider it highly relevant to highlight these dissident voices. They are an example of the tensions within food sovereignty as a complex concept: on one hand, peasant male leaders made decisions and took collective risks in order to achieve land democratisation, a main component of the agrarian reform; and on the other hand they were silencing and controlling women with divergent opinions, which contravenes the principle of guaranteeing their rights as a basis from which the respect of other rights emanates in the food sovereignty fabric.

This is another example of how the patriarchy, as a colonial legacy, permeated the peasant organisation, and even how patriarchal values shaped the 1970s' peasant struggles for land redistribution. This internal colonialism might have been accepted and used by ANUC women who deemed the peasant fight for the land more important than their own emancipation; this was a supreme goal, as is the 'peace flag' nowadays. The ANUC women, therefore, could not be interpreted as feminists. The 1970s ANUC struggles were limited, being based on land reclamation but not on food sovereignty, nor peasants' or women's rights. I interpret the ANUC's female front as a form of 'subordinated emancipation', and argue that the obedience to ANUC's male leaderships was their informed decision in exercise of their own agency. This is no different, however, to the Christian subordination of daughter to parents and wives to husbands. The peasant organisation was as the coffee patriarchy, a second family. ANUC women were devoted; when a group of European feminists asked Catalina Pérez – commonly known as, and hereafter referred to as, 'Catalina' – in the 1960s about it she answered candidly: "I am nobody without my men".⁶⁹ Is the internal colonialism that threatens food sovereignty not only present in

⁶⁸ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 69, 70 (Collective Interview).*

⁶⁹ *Memories of Participant No.72.*

some peasant men but also in peasant women? Yes. Perhaps all Latin American peoples keep on fighting different forms of personal colonial ghosts. This does not invalidate in any way the constant pursuit for food sovereignty by the peasant movement, but acknowledges that the struggle demands internal adjustments, facing contradictions and continuous reflection and learning.

The participation of ANUC women in the female fronts was informed and inspired by knowledge transfer and histories of peasant action collected by the peasant movement, which also channelled the impetus and defiance of youth towards land justice and insubordination against a worse tyranny – *terratenientes*. To motivate that ‘subordinated emancipation’ action, ANUC appealed to the oral tradition associated with Fals-Borda and their group, and research parallel to the land occupations took place. There was a generational component to women’s involvement here, as the testimonies evidence. In general, younger single women seemed to have an easier access to land occupations, rather than the wives and mothers. A general point about the need for ‘gen[d]erational’ analysis of decolonisation struggles in 1950-70s Africa have been made in the case of liberation movements, and it could be relevant to further studies of peasant movements in Colombia.⁷⁰

Women in the peasant movement could find inspiration in strong female historical characters such as Juana-Julia Guzmán or Felicita Campos, as related by Catalina. When 1970s ANUC leaders recalled the stories of Guzmán, Campos, or ‘El Boche’ for Fals-Borda and La Rosca research group, they workshopped it through storytelling with first-hand witnesses, relatives and communities, listening equally to men and women, and offering them a wide showcase so that their stories spread to other peasant communities along the Caribbean coast. Through the pen of Fals-Borda, Negrete, and Moncayo, the sponsoring of ANUC, La Rosca and the Caribe Foundation, and the drawings of Chalarka, the legends about peasant women and men were rebranded and transmitted, and the Caribbean peasant communities re-appropriated them.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Stacey Hynd, “‘Uncircumcised Boys’ and ‘Girl Spartans’: Youth, Gender and Generation in Colonial Insurgencies and Counterinsurgency, c. 1954–59,” *Gender & History* 33, no. 2 (July 2021): 536–56.

⁷¹ Díaz M, “Juana Julia Guzmán: sembrando la lucha por la tierra”; Chalarka, *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*; Asunción Lavrin, review of *Review of Tierra, violencia y género: hombres y mujeres en la historia rural de Colombia, 1930-1990*, by Donny Meertens, *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y Del Caribe / European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 65 (1998): 121–23; Liliana Vivas Cortés, “Las mujeres

The story of Manuel Hernández ‘El Boche’, a peasant who defied and killed his master in defence of his wife in the department of Córdoba around 1908, as it has been told – and sung – by peasants in Los Montes de María, and as was referred to me by Catalina, was reconstructed by ANUC, La Rosca and the foundation. With it, ANUC not only produced another peasant hero, but also demonstrated that the *terrateniente* powers had no ethics in dominating a peasant’s life and re-writing his history at will to turn peasants against their own kind. ANUC’s version, is of course, completely opposed to the official one popularised by authors as Exbrayat and the French *terratenientes*, the Lacharme family. While the new peasant version depicted a hero who faced unjust landlords, the French *terratenientes* had nicknamed him ‘El Boche’ to put him at the level of their German war enemies and made sure he was portrayed as a ‘devil’ peasant by the mainstream. There was even a radio soap-opera, and this version is still presented as the ‘official history’ by the Lacharmes. The Lacharmes’ version of the story diverts the responsibility of the tragedy of Alejandro Lacharme’s death on Hernández’s wife, and hides other facts such as his leadership against the ‘*matrícula*’ type of slavery system that peasants were enduring in estates such as the Lacharmes’ Misiguay. The *terrateniente* version used a narrative which associated the black peasantry with ‘rudeness’ and ‘vulgarity’ attributing Hernández’s rage to a ‘*casquivana*’ (easy) ‘slut’ wife flirting with other ‘*peones*’ (labourers), and portrays a crazy drunk man in search of his wife’s lover, attacking mercilessly with his *machete* whoever he crossed, including Alejandro Lacharme, who – armed with his shotgun – bravely faced ‘the beast’ but lost the duel. According to this tale, after killing Alejandro, Hernández “as in the old sacrifices of his race” set fire to the *hacienda* and walked away through the swamp where he was hunted like an animal and

Afro desconocidas por la historia de Colombia,” *Mujeres y transformación social*, 2016, Secretaría de Género, Inclusión e Igualdad - Fecode, Secretaría de Género, Inclusión e Igualdad - Fecode; Orlando Fals-Borda, *Antología*, 1. ed, Colección Obra Selecta (Bogotá: Editorial Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2010); Orlando Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*, 2nd, (1a. Ed. 1986) ed., vol. 4, 4 vols., Historia doble de la costa (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2002); Victor Negrete, “In Memory of Master Orlando Fals Borda: Basis and Development of Participatory Action Research in Córdoba (Colombia),” *International Journal of Psychological Research* 1, no. 2 (December 30, 2008): 85; Fals Borda and Moncayo, *Una sociología sentipensante para América Latina*; Víctor Manuel Moncayo Cruz, “Fals Borda: Hombre icotea y sentipensante,” *Aguaita*, June 2009.

killed. The *terrateniente* version, evidently, exults in bigoted, racist, derogatory treatment and chauvinistic language.⁷²

ANUC, La Rosca and the Caribbean Foundation reconstructed the story: in this version Hernández rebelled against the ‘*matricula*’ as a form of slavery and was organising a group of peasants.⁷³ Because of these subversive activities and his capacity to join forces with others, he was considered dangerous and cruelly persecuted and killed by landowners. In Chalarka’s comics, the *terrateniente* wanted, as in the cases of the *deshonradas* and by effect of the ‘*matricula*’ bond, to have access to his wife, which was the cause of his fight against this type of contract.

A remarkable development achieved by ANUC was that along with the storytelling, Chalarka’s drawings and comic books were strategic forms of reproduction and distribution of the peasant heroic sagas in a quick, entertaining and highly effective way among Caribbean peasantries.⁷⁴



Image 9. Felicity Campos and Juana-Julia Guzmán as part of Chalarka’s graphic novel.⁷⁵

Similarly, in Chalarka’s booklets, Juana-Julia was celebrated as the female leader who learned about socialism and associated it with the peasant collaborative lifestyle in relation with the territory. Together with the Italian peasant Adamo, she organised in the 1920s and 1930s in Córdoba, the so-

⁷² *Memories of Participant No.72*; Lacharme Lora, “El Boche”; Máximo Jiménez, *El Boche*, 1975, Album “El Indio del Senú,” Puya (Musical Archive), 1975; Jaime Exbrayat, *Historia de Montería*, 2. ed (Montería: Alcaldía Mayor de Montería, 1994); El Narrador del Caribe, “Los escritos de Álvaro Díaz Arrieta: La Pesadilla Del Boche,” *Los escritos de Álvaro Díaz Arrieta* (blog), de abril de 2010, <https://alvarodiazarrieta.blogspot.com/2010/04/la-pesadilla-del-boche.html>; Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*; Chalarka, *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*.

⁷³ The complete story of Manuel Hernández ‘El Boche’ is detailed by Fals-Borda in the fourth volume of *Historia Doble de la Costa*. The history of La Rosca’s association with the Caribbean Foundation and Chalarka is also there in full. Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*.

⁷⁴ Chalarka, *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*; Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*.

⁷⁵ Chalarka, *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*.

called *baluartes* (strongholds), or peasant communities of common resources, and she led the unions called peasant leagues. Felicita Campos, on the other hand, was recognised as a lone fighter marching to Bogotá in 1929, persecuted, imprisoned and called witch because she could scare her enemies with her 'spells'.⁷⁶ In her struggle for land she faced peasant, familial, and landowner patriarchal suppression. Felicita went into several judicial battles alone, achieving land titles for her people that were recognised by landowners in the beginning but later ignored and destroyed. She was a victim of familial patriarchal structure because it was her father himself who, according to the story, sold the farm and left her land-less. However, Chalarka portrays her as a woman speaking to men from a leadership position. The artist showed her on her deathbed surrounded by men, lamenting that they cannot reach the unity needed to fight for the land. Thus, her image becomes one of a female martyr. These historical revisions and rewritings made by ANUC and La Rosca by collecting collective memories were meant as a call to 'action'.⁷⁷ It was a political project's endeavour to shape the collective memory, rather than something that was influenced by it. Chalarka's comics applied a 'critical recovery' of memories inspired by Freire's pedagogies, and as such had a hypothetical tone, projecting ideas into the present and the future of possibilities to be fulfilled by the 'collective agency of the ANUC'.⁷⁸

ANUC was a gigantic endeavour, and an inspiring peasant project that grew very quickly both in numbers and in independence from the central government. The *terratenientes* were worried about what they called 'invasions' and, as the Lacharmes did with Hernández, used the media to publicly discredit the peasant movement. The ANUC's female front, for example, was decried as '*las roba-tierras*': the (female) land-stealers.⁷⁹ This however only entrenched peasant determination and drove the peasantry towards more frequent and

⁷⁶ Renán Vega Cantor, "Las luchas agrarias en Colombia en la década de 1920," *Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural* 1, no. 52 (2004); Correa and CNRR, "Las mujeres: de la toma de tierras a la toma de decisiones"; Chalarka, "Felicita Campos (Sucre): la mujer campesina en lucha por la tierra".

⁷⁷ *Baluartes campesinos* in: Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*; Dora Isabel Díaz Suasa and Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos, *Situación de la mujer rural colombiana: perspectiva de género* (Bogotá: Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos, 2002).

⁷⁸ Rappaport, *Cowards Don't Make History*, 127.

⁷⁹ *Memories of Participant No.72*.

massive actions, culminating in the national strike, in peasant memories one glorious night of simultaneous occupations, on 21 February 1971.

21st of February: Zero Hour

In 1970 President Lleras-Restrepo was replaced by Pastrana, last of the four National Front presidents, who won the election by a narrow and doubtful margin thanks to broad support from peasants who believed his promises of continued land distribution efforts.⁸⁰ By contrast, the large agricultural industrial guilds, ranchers, and *terratenientes* were deeply upset, and began to make great noise through mass media and opposition politicians. Although Pastrana presented himself as friend of the ‘peasant nuclei’, he avoided the expression National Association in his inaugural speech. He also talked about imposing order on the ‘abominable anarchy’ without giving in to threats or extortion, referring to peasant protests, and his actions as president were not as supportive of the peasant movement as many had hoped.⁸¹ One *terrateniente* was appointed Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Jaramillo-Ocampo; the creation of new ANUC peasant associations was suspended; the budget for ANUC was reduced; the entire INCORA team was changed; and mixed signals began to be sent to the communities.⁸² The government incorporated new training into agrarian reform, to ‘educate’ the peasants to ‘develop the ability to reason’ because they were ‘distorting the objective’ of ANUC.⁸³ These policies had an adverse effect – ANUC stood their ground and demanded greater autonomy and independence from the government. In turn, the *terratenientes* and media drew on growing Cold War-era global anti-Communist/leftist sentiment and popularised the narrative of ‘communist peasants’ and ‘invasions’ to refer to land recuperations and thereby justify the violent dismantling of peasant settlements. In the face of such burgeoning opposition, the peasant movement

⁸⁰ Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

⁸¹ Misael Pastrana Borrero, “Discurso del Doctor Misael Pastrana Borrero al tomar posesión de la Presidencia de la Republica (Nota editorial, agosto 1970),” ed. Germán Botero de los Ríos and Banco de la República, *Revista del Banco de la República* 43, no. 514 (August 30, 1970): 1150–57.

⁸² Reyes Posada, *Aparcería y capitalismo agrario*; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

⁸³ Emilio J. Valderrama, *Memorias 1970-1971* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultural - MADR, 1971), 20.

gained momentum, and in January of 1971 the ANUC board decided to plan massive land recuperations.⁸⁴

The initial date agreed for these land seizures was 23 February 1971. To take the *terratenientes* and the government by surprise, the operation needed the simultaneous mobilisation of hundreds of peasants. The decision was taken but before some board members were able to return to their departments, the risk of a potential leak came to ANUC's attention since it was discovered that some people were passing information to the government.⁸⁵ Consequently, the leaders from the ANUC Sincelejo line, Southern Montes de María, secretly instructed other members to bring forward the operation to 21 February.⁸⁶

Colombia commemorates its 'official peasant day' on the first Sunday of every June.⁸⁷ However, a more significant date for the peasants might be 21 February as 'peasant resistance day', commemorating the 'zero hour of the land recuperation'. The strategy used by Sincelejo line's leaders to change the date of the operation, suspecting that the secret plan was leaked to the authorities, is proudly remembered. Using messengers and secret codes across all Colombian territories, ANUC managed to coordinate more than 1500 families to simultaneously occupy more than 350 estates in thirteen departments at dawn.⁸⁸ These land occupations extended throughout the year, reaching a total of 645; in 1972, the number of new occupations decreased to just 54 farms; in 1973, 51; 123 in 1974; and 70 in 1975; then these numbers diminished even more.⁸⁹ As part of this national plan for land occupation, ANUC's female front came into action as human shields to protect against the state's armed forces.

⁸⁴ Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

⁸⁵ ANUC had a national executive committee composed of five members, and a directive board composed of representatives of each departmental association. The departmental associations had their own boards and all of them together formed the general assembly. There were also municipal associations and village committees.

⁸⁶ Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*, 131.

⁸⁷ Decreed by the second president of the National Front, Guillermo León Valencia, to establish the 'official peasant day' in Colombia - curiously, not because of the Agrarian Reform, but as his posthumous tribute to Pope Juan XXIII, son of a peasant couple. Presidencia de la República de Colombia, "Decree 135/1965," Pub. L. No. 135, 31586 Diario Oficial. Año CI 3 (1965); "El día del campesino cumple 29 años," *El Tiempo*, June 5, 1993, sec. Archivo, MAM-152687, El Tiempo OL.

⁸⁸ *Memories of Participant No.72*; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

⁸⁹ Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

Catalina, as a leader who was part of one of those female fronts, affirms that she was, with her sister, part of the famous occupation of Chepe Posada's farm 'La Antioqueña', which was accompanied by Fals-Borda and his group in 1972. This estate was distributed to hundreds of families, including hers.⁹⁰ Inspired by Juana-Julia and Adamo's *baluarte* (stronghold), they formed *baluartes de auto-gestión campesina*, 'peasant self-management strongholds', which aimed to be small socialist communities where peasantries could be independent and autonomous (see image 10).⁹¹



Image 10. *Baluarte de Auto-gestión Campesina Vicente Adamo*. This was created in former latifundio 'La Antioqueña' surrendered by Chepe Posada. Source: left Negrete, 2013; right, Fals-Borda, 1986.⁹²

Catalina called them 'farms', while Chucho called them '*Mingas*' which is the indigenous name for community endeavours: traditionally applied to agricultural works, it is more recently also used for protest actions.⁹³ Among the grassroot peasantry in La Antioqueña, the term *baluarte de auto-gestión campesina* was used but with slightly different meanings, and others did not value the idea of economic self-sufficiency associated with it.⁹⁴ With ANUC's decay in 1974-75, the *baluartes* also lost social cohesion.⁹⁵ Retrospectively, some peasants believe today that they did not fully appreciate then the advantages of the collective organisation which was facilitated by the initial

⁹⁰ *Memories of Participant No. 72*.

⁹¹ Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*.

⁹² Fals Borda.

⁹³ *Memories of Participant No. 72*; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

⁹⁴ Rappaport, *Cowards Don't Make History*; Negrete, "In Memory of Master Orlando Fals Borda."

⁹⁵ Víctor Negrete Barrera, *IAP: La Investigación Acción Participativa En Córdoba* (Montería, Córdoba, Colombia: Ediciones Universidad del Sinú - Elías Bechara Zainum, 2013); Negrete, "In Memory of Master Orlando Fals Borda."

collective assignment of lands by INCORA. However, once individual land titles were confirmed, some peasant owners wanted to manage their land separately, and they succumbed to the individualism promoted by capitalist agriculture.⁹⁶

The *baluartes* or *mingas* were significant efforts to preserve peasant economies and deliver a preliminary form of food sovereignty. There, the territory, resources, work, everything was run communally, as a community and in a collaborative way. According to the memories of the old ANUC leaders and members interviewed, once INCORA had agreements with the *terratenientes* and claimed any land via expropriation, donation, or purchase, it was assigned as a large estate to a group of peasants in provisional plots. At that moment, for those users, in practice, the farm became a communal property where food security relied on collaboratively grown crops and community *pancoger*. All members of the peasant households worked together, men, women and children. There was no hired labour, and both women and men fulfilled agricultural and leadership roles even though in general married *baluarte* women seemed to prefer to accept and endorse their husbands' voice.⁹⁷ The *baluarte*, therefore, also reproduced the gender asymmetries already mentioned, observed in patriarchal peasant families and in collectives in the beginning of the 1970s.

Peasant women as keepers of collective memories and oral traditions must live up to their own legend and be the embodiment and role model of their wisdom. The account by Catalina, as a well-known peasant leader recalls stories of an idealised grandmother and of other peasant heroes such as Juana-Julia Guzmán which intersects with many stories by Fals-Borda. She represents the peasant women's mission of safeguarding memory as much more than just remembering their lives and re-telling what happened so that new peasant generations can learn their past. For Catalina, it involves the actual personification of collective memories: living the legend to safeguard peasant cultural identity. They bear the responsibility to keep Juana-Julia, Felicita,

⁹⁶ *Memories of Participant No.75 Anonymous (Interview 51), Los Montes de María, Recording (Ovejas, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).*

⁹⁷ Fals Borda; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria; Memories of Participant No.58; Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 69, 70 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No.72; Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 73, 74 (Collective Interview), Los Montes de María, Recording (Los Palmitos, Sucre, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participant No.75.*

Manuel Hernández, Fals-Borda, Chucho and Catalina's grandmother themselves alive to inspire the younger generation, and to make sure that their deeds are 'rightfully' registered in formal knowledge systems and research like that of this thesis.

The *Terrateniente* Coalition Counter-reform

The agrarian reform did not last twelve or sixteen years,
the agrarian reform lasted four years,
the four years of Carlos Lleras.⁹⁸

Carlos Villamil-Chaux

Villamil-Chaux, INCORA manager during Lleras-Restrepo's presidency, was convinced that the core of Colombia's agrarian reform was Article 58 of Law 135, which established the mandate for the purchase or expropriation of poorly-exploited land. Villamil-Chaux believed that the *terratenientes'* lands were in most cases hoarded terrains for long-term investments, instruments of power and/or wealth tax evasion, and that therefore these lands were not fulfilling any social contribution other than to enrich an already wealthy capitalist owner. To Villamil-Chaux, everything else in the SAR law was a concession that hindered the redistributive effect it should have had. He explains the reform's success during those four years and its decline after, using a forces summation model: the result vector was favourable to the peasants when the state vector – Lleras-Restrepo – was on their side. Villamil-Chaux coined the expression 'political-*terrateniente* coalition', or just 'the coalition', to mean the alliance of powers formed between *terrateniente* landlords, nascent corporate agro-industry, cattle ranching guilds and local stakeholders such as relatives, friends, some massive media, transporters, merchants, district or departmental judges, and notaries, among others.⁹⁹ After a whole year of massive land recuperations, the *terrateniente* coalition was formalised in a closed-door pact widely known as 'The Chicoral Pact' in January 1972: a private political agreement to protect landlords and prevent upcoming land redistribution, which also coincided with

⁹⁸ Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, *El lanzamiento de la reforma agraria del Frente Nacional Se Vivió En Casa Lleras* (Bogotá, Colombia: Casa Lleras, 2016), sec. 48:54 Min., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2u8wVunk_cU.

⁹⁹ Villamil Chaux, *La reforma agraria del Frente Nacional*.

the dilution of the initial enthusiasm towards the Alliance for Progress internationally.

Machado, Kalmanovitz, Fajardo and many other scholars have evidenced that through the counter-reform law set, formed by laws 4 of 1973, 5 of 1973 and 6 of 1975, the government granted regressive measures in practice such as re-focusing on credit lines and productivity and abandoning the redistributive initiatives, and also reforming the ANUC and repressing the peasant organisation, all in exchange for a taxation increase.¹⁰⁰ The reasons exposed as presented by the ministry of agriculture in 1974 evidenced a developmentalist and capitalist mindset which aimed to alter the bare meaning of the agrarian reform, twisting it into an antithesis of peasant agriculture and economies:

the main problem in the Colombian countryside is the smallholding ... we will emphasise rural development projects ... much higher yields ... credit, marketing and "promotion of women" are part of this new strategy ... The agrarian reform must be conceived not only as a social strategy, but an economic one ... that was the fault of those who propose massive and indiscriminate expropriations which lead to chaos ... by mandate of Law 5 of 1973, resources are redirected towards activities that the government considers more useful ... or more productive.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, according to this discourse, the government claimed to favour rural women, while, in the fields, state violence against peasants including women was instigated.

The dismantling started with the internal manipulation of the ANUC congress in November 1972 in Armenia to create division.¹⁰² The repression took the form of state violence and dirty war in the territories. *Terratenientes* were even allowed the use of *pájaros*, which translates as 'birds' but in the popular language means 'private assassins', to repel peasants.¹⁰³ The new ANUC board appointed by the government led the so-called ANUC Armenia

¹⁰⁰ Machado Cartagena and Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *La política de reforma agraria y tierras en Colombia*; Kalmanovitz and López, "La agricultura en Colombia entre 1950 y 2000"; Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*.

¹⁰¹ Vallejo Mejía, *Memorias 1973-1974*, vi.

¹⁰² Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986.

¹⁰³ Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*, 1986; *Memories of Participant No.72*; *Memories of Participant No.75*.

faction, which lost strength and relevance over time until it completely disappeared.¹⁰⁴ The dissident Sincelejo faction radicalised in response to government action and violent repression. Many of their leaders were killed, while others like Catalina remained hidden for months and managed to flee the country to survive in exile under very harsh conditions.¹⁰⁵ The Sincelejo ANUC then fell prey to political and radical movements which divided them even more.¹⁰⁶

Negrete, who led the Caribbean foundation, later on reflected on the synergy of the ANUC-PAR deterioration. La Rosca's paternalism made the peasant *baluartes* dependant on the research team's logistical and financial aid, therefore they might not have been as self-sufficient as they were supposed to be. In relation to this, the peasant self-management strongholds were not profitable enough to raise the quality of life of their families by themselves. Additionally, the inference of political groups into the already delicate balance between La Rosca, the Caribbean foundation and ANUC became problematic.¹⁰⁷ La Rosca was founded to develop PAR independently from political parties or armed groups; however, ANUC was tempted by both, and some of the peasant users were actually active party members already.¹⁰⁸ Part of the peasant leagues' vestiges were still influenced by socialism, Maoist groups such as the Independent Revolutionary Worker's Movement MOIR, Marxists such as the Marxist Leninist New Communist Party PCML and the Marxist Leninist League, promoters of abstentionism and the armed seizure of power. ANUC split definitively after its congress in 1974.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Díaz Callejas, *Colombia*.

¹⁰⁵ Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria; Memories of Participant No.72; Memories of Participant No.75*.

¹⁰⁶ Díaz Callejas, *Colombia*.

¹⁰⁷ Negrete Barrera, *IAP: La Investigación Acción Participativa En Córdoba*; Negrete, "In Memory of Master Orlando Fals Borda."

¹⁰⁸ *Memories of Participant No.39*; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

¹⁰⁹ Víctor Negrete Barrera, "La Investigación Acción Participativa En Córdoba: 45 Años de Historia Fundación Del Sinú y Centro de Estudios Sociales y Políticos de La Universidad Del Sinú. 5º Encuentro Anual de La Red de Investigación Acción de Las Américas (ARNA) y 1ª Asamblea Global," *Entorno Geográfico*, no. 15 (July 14, 2018): 140; Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*.

Peasants recognise the involvement of extremist groups and their responsibility on the division of the ANUC: *Memories of Participant No.39 Alfonso Herrera Rivera (Interview 32), Los Montes de María*, Recording (San Juan Nepomuceno, Bolívar, 2019).; Pérez and CNRR, *Luchas campesinas y reforma agraria*.

There is, however, identifiable agency and responsibility in the self-determination of these peasants who were 'instrumentalised' by emerging left-wing groups and revolutionary guerrilla movements. The collected testimonies display deep reflections of peasants, men and women, who feel accountable for their own decisions. Today some of them look back with mistrust towards those political groups that led them along different paths from their farming vocation. They can identify peasant leaders who went astray, which is why some left the movement in the first place. In more recent years many of the old leaders who are still alive and new generations alike are re-building their steps, learning lessons from the past and making an important effort to revive the peasant organisation in a more pluralist way, with a gender dimension strongly empowered and visible. Part of the reason why La Rosca, the Caribbean Foundation and ANUC dissolved their alliance was their ideological differences.¹¹⁰ Although Fals-Borda promoted socialist organisations and a type of research that investigated the reality in order to change it, which he initially called 'militant research' and eventually became PAR, he advocated for a peasant organisation which was independent of the political parties.¹¹¹

ANUC gave peasantries their first positions in several official boards where the agrarian policies were discussed and decisions were made, and this taught peasantries across the nation that representation and politics were key to defying the *terratiente* coalition, knowledge which is shaping the current political dimension of their resistance and 'repeasantisation' efforts. This includes a strong rural feminist peasant movement with Catalina Pérez back in a position of authority as an outstanding female leader. Following the rise and downfall of the 1970s peasant movement, rural women slowly gained more predominant spaces in peasant organisations. Contemporary female peasant leaders in the National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones ANZORC recently launched their manifesto with the motto: "*La defensa de la tierra y el territorio, así como el cuidado de nuestros cuerpos y nuestras vidas, es nuestro compromiso. Para las mujeres campesinas ¡Tierra, territorio y paz!*" ("The defence of land and territory, as well as the care of our bodies and our lives, is our commitment. For rural women: land, territory and peace!").¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Negrete, "In Memory of Master Orlando Fals Borda."

¹¹¹ Fals Borda, *Retorno a la tierra*.

¹¹² ANZORC, "Manifiesto."

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on the rural women's rights aspect of food sovereignty to interrogate the 1970s counter-reform. It has argued that food security in 1970s Colombia was undermined by gendered colonial legacies such as the patriarchal power structures, patriarchal bargains of power and land accumulation capitalism. Patriarchal legacies shaped the actions and behaviours of the *terrateniente* elites and their circle of allies, and to a lesser extent also the 'family-like' groups such as FEDECAFÉ and even the peasant movement and families. Women have been vital to the peasantries' resilience given the roles they have assumed as care givers, cultural gatekeepers, seed custodians and keepers of collective memories; bonds that endure thanks to women-to-women knowledge transfer, since many of them in the 1970s lacked formal education and remained illiterate. This led them to develop other skills rooted in oral traditions and Nature literacy that made them respected and valued wise-women in their old age. The traditions of the *carángano* and the *bindes* have been presented as outstanding examples of this gendered Nature literacy. Traditionally, wise-women have carried, nurtured, and personified the food, medicinal and care culture for families, communities and Nature as if they themselves were peasant *baluartes*, or strongholds of self-sufficiency. However, their role in food sovereignty has not been properly acknowledged. It seems also that in most cases feminine agency was restricted; women's self-determination has been defined by the limited freedom with which they could make decisions and put their skills at 'the service of' family, agricultural production or the peasant cause, in which case I have qualified their consent decision as a paradoxical emancipation, a decision upon subordination and ultimately, what some scholars call a patriarchal bargain. ANUC women became recognised peasant leaders and were key as the 'feminine front' of land occupations, as human shields for men's actions in the 1970s peasant organisation; however, in the beginning they were denied a place on the directive board and in the organisational decision-making discussions.

In contrast, it has been argued that the capitalist and colonial power and influence exercised by *terratenientes* was opposed to food sovereignty, even in their 'kindly' paternalist forms. Villamil-Chaux called the community of allies who made the Chicoral Pact effectively, in practice, a '*terrateniente* coalition'. These

colonial powers' alignment was a key depeasantising agent. In situations of benevolent patriarchy, as in the case of the 'good landlord', the dependency and comfort zone that paternalistic landlord-based institutions provided shaped a form of contingent and unsustainable food security that was highly dependent on unpaid female labour that increased environmental and social injustice. The case of coffee farms' *alimentadoras* was presented as a case where food security relied entirely on female work overload. Peasant rights, peasant women's rights, food sovereignty and peasant national and transnational institutions are resilient reactions to the limitations of a patriarchal, colonial and dependent food security. In sum, this chapter evidenced the tensions between food security and food sovereignty with gender perspective. It also explored the effects of the 1971 Chicoral Pact in Los Montes de María with gender and generational lenses, highlighting the roles of young peasant women in the face of the *terratiente* counter-reform.

The Chicoral Pact policies which facilitated the decimation of the peasant movement by killing, imprisoning, or sending its most radical leaders into exile also promoted the abandonment of peasant agriculture to sponsor industrial monoculture and profit maximisation. Those advances led by the development of High Yield Crops (HYC) are widely known as the Green Revolution, theme of the following chapter. The accelerated growth of agrarian technologies to make agricultural land more profitable and productive was a threat for food sovereignty. It was built drawing from a productivist paradigm that depreciated the Nature literacy and wisdom that peasant women stand for: peasant culture, ancestral knowledge of the territory, care for Nature, bio/ agrodiversity, water, seeds and/or the organic wealth of soils.

CHAPTER 4. 'The Green Poison'

Decolonising Environmental Histories of Green Revolutions in Peasantries

[When] the agricultural technification began, the yucca could no longer be planted next to the rice because the poison killed it ... the herbicide killing the wild to clean the rice, killed the yucca; it even killed the maize. Because [that] rice is like crop for the rich: pretentious and bad. [That] rice wants nothing around, to be alone... and the herbicide poisoned the water canal, and you could not drink from it anymore, nor take a bath, and the fish died down there...¹

Continuing the thematic analysis of internal colonialism and patriarchal domination of women and Nature, this chapter reviews the social and environmental impacts on the landscape and peasants' food sovereignty and food security of the introduction of Green Revolution agriculture across the case study territories.² The adoption of Green Revolution ideas and methods, a set of high-yield cropping agro-technologies, was slowly introduced through new improved seeds across various times and scenarios during the second half of the twentieth century in Colombia. The resulting monocultures and associated wave of agro-technological solutions included what peasants call 'poisons', which depleted the soils and environment. This chapter focuses on the rupture created among peasantries and Nature, caused both by neo-colonial ideas of what rural progress should look like and the internally colonial and capitalist interests of agrarian elites. The crop efficiency models developed by scientists from the United States in the 1950-60s in Colombia were widely spread after the Chicoral Pact which committed the government with a change of discourses and policies concerning the rural development in 1970s. This chapter mainly critiques these reforms by arguing that they were only ever intended to

¹ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

² This is subject of study and exposure by ecofeminist scholars. See works by scholars such as Gudynas, Shiva, Mies and the Latin American Quesada Guerrero, in: Gudynas, *Derechos de la naturaleza y políticas ambientales*, 2014; Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* (London: Zed Books, 1988); Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism* (London: Zed Books, 2014); Raquel Quesada Guerrero, "Empoderamiento de mujeres latinoamericanas a través de prácticas ecofeministas," *Investigaciones Feministas* 1 (2010): 97–109.

maximise short-term gains at the expense of damaging these socio-ecosystems' ecologies. It also recognises the agency of not only powerful agrarian elites pushing the high-yield premise, but also of the peasants themselves who were attracted by the idea of making a profit prompted their own depeasantisation, something that they currently recall with deep regrets.

This chapter reviews the environmental consequences of the counter-reformist 'rural development' ideas as a side effect of the post-Chicoral Pact agriculture, characterised by the spread of homogeneous crops across the country. The soils' 'poisoning', being the most salient impact perceived by peasantries in the case study territories, gives title to this chapter. The new Green Revolution seeds were considered by the peasants to be 'high-maintenance seeds' which demanded more from the soils and required high amounts of synthetic fertiliser at the risk of nitrogen pollution. The 'poisons' – pesticides and herbicides – also became a new necessity. However, as mentioned in the opening quote, these agrochemicals killed almost everything around including other edible plants and other living beings in the air and soils. In spite of the application of these toxic compounds, the genetic homogeneity and planting density in these new crops facilitated the advent of plant pathogens. The scientific literature has used such terms as 'invasive' or 'foreign' to refer to non-native animals or plants introduced into a region, holding non-human species responsible for their impact on strange ecosystems, while dismissing humans who, sometimes inadvertently, introduced them in the first place.³ The Green Revolution, promoted firstly by seed breeders and later by agrarian elites and government, facilitated the establishment of non-native species of pathogens too. It also caused the exponential spread of pre-existing pathogens which had formerly been under control in biodiverse agroecosystems through natural predation or because of their own inactivity as occurs often with soil fungi. Thus, this chapter title highlights the contradiction in implementing agro-technologies which were to provide food security but, in actual practice,

³ Some new and old titles that exemplify the invaders/aliens language: Dan Eatherley, *Invasive Aliens: The Plants and Animals from over There That Are over Here*, 2019; Joel W. Hedgpeth, "Foreign Invaders," *Science* 261, no. 5117 (July 2, 1993): 34–36; Michael J. Livingston, Craig D. Osteen, and Donna Roberts, "Regulating Agricultural Imports to Keep out Foreign Pests and Disease," *Amber Waves*, 2008; E.E.F. Feal, "Leptospirosis in England Due to Foreign Species," *Lancet*, 1957, 720–21; J.A. Stevenson, *Foreign Plant Diseases* (Washington D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, 1926).

undermined the agroecosystems' ecologies – which are fundamental to food security. This consequently threatened food sovereignty as well, causing environmental injustice: an additional pressure on peasant landscapes and economies. It also broke, in part, the radical relationality between peasantry and Nature.

The green poisons are, however, used in this chapter as a lens to explore broader processes of change. This chapter reflects on the 'environmental memories' collected from the three study sites, in combination with statistical, archival and secondary sources, to interrogate the institutional and scientific approach to histories of Green Revolutions in Colombian agro-industrial development studies and phytosanitary reports. These peasants' critical perspectives help to decolonise histories otherwise saturated with 'success' narratives of progress, yield, profitability and land exploitation which underestimated effects on peasant culture and landscape. Ultimately, this chapter argues that neo-colonial and internally colonial policies which favoured Green Revolution changes to maximise profits directly impacted not only food security but food sovereignty and peasant and environmental rights and, as such, they were a continuation and substantive part of the Chicoral Pact counter-reform, if not a counter-reform by themselves.

This chapter also critiques, in a decolonial manner, the narratives surrounding the role played by technical service experts and foreign specialists, who saw themselves as scientific 'missionaries', when influencing peasantries into abandoning their established agricultural practices and questioning their own peasant knowledge to prioritise such capitalist goals as productivity and profit. Therefore, throughout this chapter the word 'missionaries' is used frequently, especially referring to the international scientists sent to Latin America to experiment and develop new edible plant varieties under the developmentalist efforts of the 'war against hunger'. Not only did these men approach their tasks as evangelists or apostles of agrarian science, but aid programmes preceding and accompanying them were also called 'missions'.⁴

⁴ These scientific missions followed missions by the FAO and the World Bank: David McBride, *Missions for Science: U.S. Technology and Medicine in America's African World* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2002); E. C. Stakman, Richard Bradfield, and Paul C. Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger* (Harvard University Press, 1967); James Nicholson, "Norman Borlaug's Green Revolution Saved Millions," Letter to the Editor - Wall Street Journal, May 4, 2020, Wall Street Journal; James Sumberg, Dennis Keeney, and Benedict Dempsey,

The war-like, paternalist and religious expressions used during the enactment of the Green Revolution are part of the evidence of its colonial character. This is not a critique of any external efforts to change or alter the natural habits of peasant populations, but of the motives and methods which made these interventions neo-colonial and colonial. Alternatively, for instance, some current research on agroecology and food sovereignty uses participatory collaborations between scientific and peasant epistemes.

This chapter has five sections. The first is a conceptualisation, from global to local, of Green Revolutions. The second focuses on irrigated rice and the toxic accumulation in the Los Montes de María sub-region. The third reviews the coffee region's great deforestation, following the development of dwarf sun varieties, and its consequences. The fourth section reviews the 'migrant' seeds and pests in Santurbán's potato fields, and how the excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides have arguably affected the *páramo* endemic ecosystem. Finally, the chapter reflects on the Green Revolution's impact across Colombia once the food aid regime was over and the open market and neoliberal ideas took over.

Long Global and Small Local Green Revolutions

'Green Revolution' is a universal expression for the massive introduction of agro-technology in the fields to maximise yield and revenues. It started with philanthropically funded research in the US, before being extended to Mexico and other countries. These interventions followed US president Truman's formula of a 'modern empire of democracy' which was prescribed for what he

"Public Agronomy: Norman Borlaug as 'Brand Hero' for the Green Revolution," *Journal of Development Studies* 48, no. 11 (November 2012): 1587–1600.

For examples of missions sent to Colombia see: FAO, "Andean Indian Mission ILO/FAO 1958-1961" (Misc., Rome, Italy, 1961 1958), FA 14/5, FAO Archives, Rome; Harald Agerly, "RG 71.11 Series G3 Mission to Colombia Reports by Experts 1956" (Report, Cartagena, Colombia, May 1956), RG 71.11 Series G3, FAO Archives, Rome; Michele Alacevich, "The Currie Mission in Colombia, 1949–1953," in *The Political Economy of the World Bank: The Early Years* (Stanford University Press, 2009), 11–63; FAO/IBRD Agricultural Mission to Colombia, "RG 41.0 Series G5 FAO/IBRD Joint Missions Report Colombia 1955" (Correspondence, Rome, Italy, October 20, 1955), RG 41.0 Series G5, FAO Archives, Rome; FAO, "RG 71.11 Series A1 FAO Country Missions (Colombia) Outgoing Correspondence to FAO Staff" (Correspondence, Rome, Italy, 1958 1955), RG 71.11 Series A1, FAO Archives, Rome; A.J. Staffe, "RG 71.11 Series U1 Mission to Colombia Photos by A.J.Staffe (Arranged by Expert)" (Report/Photos, Rome, Italy, 1952 1951), RG 71.11 Series U1, FAO Archives, Rome.

called 'underdeveloped' countries in 1949.⁵ The Green Revolution was yet another diplomatic and humanitarian face of the Cold War, a part of the American food aid regime.⁶ It was the 'green' response to the 'red' advance, as named by Gaud, head of the Agency for International Development of the US Department of State in 1968.⁷ This was, therefore, another form of neo-colonial and developmentalist intervention, much like the cereal donations or conditioned financial support critiqued in the second chapter. However, this one was enacted through agricultural scientists who felt and acted as 'missionaries'.

The historical and agroecological debates around the Green Revolution's impact mirror current disagreements between different disciplines, and even different epistemologies and ontologies, around the contemporary global food systems and their vulnerabilities. They also encompass the previously introduced tensions between food security – standards coming from above – and food sovereignty and peasant rights – coming from below. The Green Revolution approach to food security was focused on availability through ever-increasing yields: growing more and more food to 'fight hunger' for a growing population.⁸

Norman Borlaug, creator of high yield (HY) wheat and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970, has been nicknamed as the 'Father of the Green Revolution'.⁹ Following the militarised language widely used by the Green

⁵ Harry S Truman, "Inaugural Address of Harry S. Truman" (Washington, D.C. : U.S. G.P.O. : for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 1989, January 20, 1949), Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States : from George Washington 1789 to George Bush 1989, Lillian Goldman Law Library - Yale Law School, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/truman.asp.

⁶ Philip McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions* (Rugby, UK: Practical Action Publishing, 2014); Philip McMichael, "Historicizing Food Sovereignty," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 933–57.

⁷ The exact quote was: "These and other developments in the field of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violet [sic] red revolution like that of the Soviets... I call it the Green Revolution". See: William S Gaud, "The Green Revolution: Accomplishments and Apprehensions" (The Society for International Development, Shorehan Hotel, Washington, DC: The AgBioWorld Foundation, 1968), para. 7, <http://www.agbioworld.org/biotech-info/topics/borlaug/borlaug-green.html>.

⁸ Based on with Malthusian concerns. See: James Lang, *Feeding a Hungry Planet: Rice, Research & Development in Asia & Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); T. R. (Thomas Robert) Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as It Affects the Future Improvement of Society. With Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet and Other Writers* (London, J. Johnson, 1798).

⁹ S. M.S. Tomar, "Norman E. Borlaug, the Father of Green Revolution Who Saved Millions from Starvation (March 25, 1914-Sept. 12, 2009) Obituary," *Indian Journal of Genetics and Plant Breeding* 69, no. 4 (2009): 403–403; Jonathan Riley, "The Green Revolution's Father Dies," *Farmers Weekly*, September 18, 2009; James Sumberg, Dennis Keeney, and Benedict Dempsey, "Public Agronomy: Norman Borlaug as 'Brand Hero' for the Green Revolution," *Journal of Development Studies* 48, no. 11 (November 2012): 1587–1600.

Revolution's promoters, he has also been branded a 'hero' who fought the 'global war' against hunger. As the son of Norwegian farmers running from the potato famine, he grew up on an Iowa farm, suffered starvation periods himself, and survived the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Consequently, Borlaug was determined to end hunger and 'liberate' peasants and small farmers from the 'drudgery' of precarious and hard farm work.¹⁰ His solution to hunger was crop efficiency: to produce more and more with less effort with High Yield Crops (HYC). Borlaug not only made the first tangible advances on HYC, but also promoted the Green Revolution worldwide with all its mathematical, systemic and neo-colonial reasoning: assuming food security in terms of an efficiency/inefficiency formula with inputs and outputs to solve a problem defined in terms of scarcity and precarious workers. This apparent efficiency, however, did not consider social and environmental variables, nor sustainability, which accounts for the long-term failures of the Green Revolution.

Borlaug, Stakman, Bradfield and Mangelsdorf, among other American agro-scientists, were instrumental to a diplomatic strategy which presented the Green Revolution as 'missionary work' in Latin America, where the recruited researchers were literally called 'apostles of science'. It seems from their memoirs that this generation of agronomists approached their task as true humanitarians, feeling like evangelisers and ignoring the interventionist implications behind their work.¹¹ In Mexico, as in India or Colombia, they promoted improved seeds and toxic inorganic agro-chemicals as replacements for indigenous and peasant traditions.

The Green Revolution's side effects on Global South countries, however, cannot be attributed merely to one man or even a handful of men; private and political interests – mostly American – were moving resources years before

¹⁰ Borlaug's first biographer, also sponsored by the Rockefeller foundation, Leon Hesser, portrayed him as the saviour of millions of lives. Vietmeyer has an extensive work on the scientist's life building an epic legend of the boy coming from hunger, to defeat it. More recent biographies are less biased and challenge those narratives, such as those by Charles Mann. Leon F. Hesser, *The Man Who Fed the World: Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug and His Battle to End World Hunger: An Authorized Biography*, 1st ed (Dallas, Texas: Durban House Publishing Company, Inc, 2006); Noel Vietmeyer, *Our Daily Bread: The Essential Norman Borlaug*, 2013; Charles C. Mann, *The Wizard and the Prophet: Two Remarkable Scientists and Their Dueling Visions to Shape Tomorrow's World*, First edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018).

¹¹ This quotation from the 'Campaigns Against Hunger' illustrates the GR credo: "[Staff] should have the qualities of scientist, philosopher, leader, diplomat, farmer and day labo[u]rer; and he should be imbued with true missionary spirit": Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*.

Borlaug visited Mexico to research and develop the HYC. Arguably, the very notion of prioritising the massification of food production and its implementation at the expense of the environment dates to the application of the Haber-Bosch process, used to produce ammunition, and, later, the manufacturing of synthetic nitrogen fertilisation after the First World War.¹² This was followed by the development of the insecticide DDT which, after its use in the Second World War, also found a new application in agriculture, with devastating effects on biodiversity.¹³ However, in Latin America, it was only through the research, training and promotion of HY seeds by American scientists in the 1950s that those complementary agrochemical technologies were widely promoted.¹⁴ A closer inspection of stories from the Mexican experimental farms and the American researchers who preceded Borlaug allows us to see the footprint of the international political and philanthropic scaffolding set in place in advance.¹⁵ This also proved to be the case in Colombia where, for example, the various *fomento* campaigns had been supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, dating back to the 1940s. These antecedents evidence an expanded process which Patel calls the 'Long Green Revolution'.¹⁶

According to Patel, the Long Green Revolution was slowly advanced before the HYC seeds, and even extends into our contemporary time as current efforts to re-edit the term – as in the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) – attempt to continue a neo-colonial intervention of the still-considered 'underdeveloped' world's agriculture.¹⁷

¹² Hanspeter Witschi, "Fritz Haber: December 9, 1868–January 29, 1934," *Toxicology* 149, no. 1 (August 2000): 3–15; Michael Udvardi et al., "A Research Road Map for Responsible Use of Agricultural Nitrogen," *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 5 (May 31, 2021): 660155; Michael Udvardi et al., "Impacts of Agricultural Nitrogen on the Environment and Strategies to Reduce These Impacts," *Procedia Environmental Sciences* 29 (2015): 303.

¹³ Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 40th anniversary ed., 1st Mariner Books ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

¹⁴ Seed breeders also promoted inorganic and synthetic fertilisers and pesticides to complement their developments. As such, they were also 'sellers' of a wide variety of new agro-technologies. Borlaug actively sold the Green Revolution worldwide and publicly ridiculed alternative voices such as Rachel Carson's, whose 'Silent Spring' he referred to as "vicious, hysterical propaganda... half-science-half-fiction... diabolic, vitriolic bitter one-sided attack on the use of pesticides". Sumberg, Keeney, and Dempsey, "Public Agronomy," November 2012; Norman E. Borlaug, "Mankind and Civilization at Another Crossroad: In Balance with Nature - A Biological Myth," *BioScience* 22, no. 1 (1972): 41.

¹⁵ Ochoa, *Feeding Mexico*; Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*.

¹⁶ Patel, "The Long Green Revolution."

¹⁷ Gary Toenniessen, Akinwumi Adesina, and Joseph DeVries, "Building an Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1136, no. 1 (July 25, 2008): 233–42; Carol B. Thompson, "Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA): Advancing the Theft of African Genetic Wealth," *Review of African Political Economy* 39, no. 132 (June 2012):

Origins of the Green Revolution in Colombia

In Colombia, drawing from interviews in the three sub-regions, peasants' understandings of the Green Revolution are expressed in terms of the abandonment of 'Natural' production, the introduction of new seeds/seedlings/varieties and the arrival of both the pesticides they called 'poison' and chemical fertilisers.¹⁸ They view it as a group of practices and technologies they identify, as in the case given in the quote which opens this chapter, with the agrarian technification. This effectively suggests a holistic understanding of it as a change of their peasant agricultural practices using 'technological packages'. In these sub-regions, the Green Revolution packages can be traced back to extension services – technical assistance – coming in part from providers and the government, but mainly from the agrarian guilds called Federations. The Federations refer to food producers' guilds managed by local elites in each crop sector, such as the Federation of coffee growers FEDECAFÉ, the rice Federation FEDEARROZ, and the potato Federation FEDEPAPA – to mention only those involved in the studied sub-regions. Although agrarian elites represented in the Federations and the *terratenientes* are not necessarily the same, they did overlap. Certainly, the advance of the Green Revolution, upheld by Federations, was an extension of the *terrateniente* coalition's counter-reformist policies using the discourse of 'rural development', as the Ministry of Agriculture's reports reflect.¹⁹ In other words, although the missions and missionaries began their diagnosis, research, and training in the 1950s, what I found in these cases is that it was mainly through the local agrarian elites, after the Chicoral Pact, that Green Revolution developments and ideas were adopted. Furthermore, in these cases, it was the research and development conducted by the Federations – and not by American scientists – that was imparted to peasantries in the 1970s and 1980s. The Federations

345–50; Rachel Bezner Kerr, "Lessons from the Old Green Revolution for the New: Social, Environmental and Nutritional Issues for Agricultural Change in Africa," *Progress in Development Studies* 12, no. 2–3 (July 2012): 213–29.

¹⁸ *Memories of Participant No.7; Memories of Participant No.39; Memories of Participant No.47 Anonymous (Interview 36), Los Montes de María, Recording (San Juan de Nepomuceno, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019); Memories of Participant No.67; Memories of Participant No.68; Memories of Participant No.83.*

¹⁹ Vallejo Mejía, *Memorias 1973-1974*; Pardo Buelvas, *Memorias 1974-1975, 1975*; Rafael Pardo Buelvas, *Memorias 1974-1975* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1975).

recruited the personnel trained by the American scientists in universities and experimental farms and, thanks to philanthropic funds, continued the agrarian missions which these started decades before.

Ultimately, I argue that the Long Green Revolution in Colombia evolved in two stages. The first was the neo-colonial intervention of American research on site, while the second was led by the Federations' own new HY seeds' development and their training and technical services. The second stage advanced separately in each sub-region according to their predominant commercial crop, namely potato, coffee or rice. These local Green Revolutions are the core of analysis in this chapter. However, before dealing with them, I will briefly refer to the first stage and some common features of the Long Green Revolution at national level.

The Colombian Long Green Revolution's starting point could be placed in 1945, when the research sponsoring priorities of the Rockefeller Foundation moved away from health and medicine and towards agriculture.²⁰ From this moment and until 1967 it was characterised by multiple missions and the development of a governmental structure to administer its research. It was given impetus by the arrival of international delegations, such as the Nebraska University mission in May 1950 by Borlaug's American colleagues, Dr. Lewis M. Roberts and Dr. Joseph A. Rupert, both of whom had five years' experience with the Mexican project.²¹ The American Agency for International Development (USAID) also ran a large scale extension programme called Colombian American Agricultural Technical Service (STACA) with the Ministry of Agriculture for almost a decade (1953-1962).²² The FAO additionally sent various missions to Colombia led by at least ten international experts in rural services, soils and waters, forestry, and home economy, between 1965 and 1967.²³ In 1967, while the SAR was in force, Colombia received more grants

²⁰ Christopher Abel, "External Philanthropy and Domestic Change in Colombian Health Care: The Role of the Rockefeller Foundation, ca. 1920-1950," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (August 1995): 339.

²¹ Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*.

²² Toro Agudelo, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1962*.

²³ Mejía Salazar, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional 1965-1966*; Fritz Loenholdt, "Monthly Field Report of Experts and Related Correspondence. Loenholdt, F. 1963-1965" (Misc., Rome, Italy, 1965 1963), EX 3/4, FAO Archives, Rome; FAO, "SF 4/1 Colombia. Feeding Consultant 1967-1970" (Misc., Rome, Italy, 1970 1967), SF 4/1 Colombia, FAO Archives, Rome.

than any other country in Latin America from the Rockefeller Foundation.²⁴ After 1955, the Colombian government had centralised in the Department of Agrarian Research (DIA) the management of all these research efforts, the experimental farms, the Rockefeller funds and the work of international missionaries – of whom, by 1961, there were already fifteen.²⁵ This task was then taken up by the Colombian Institute of Agriculture (Col-ICA) in 1963.²⁶

Developments made in new varieties of maize (led by Roberts) and wheat (led by Rupert) were the first advances of the Green Revolution in Colombia. Their most remarkable achievement was perhaps that in 1951 the Colombian agronomist Eduardo Echavarriga developed ‘Eto’, the first local synthetic variety of maize. By 1967, 36 varieties of hybrid maize were distributed among Colombian farmers. However, Roberts and Rupert realised that native breeds were in fact more resistant to yellow rust.²⁷ In 1963 about 19,500 Colombian wheat lines were sent to Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Ecuador, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Peru and Yugoslavia. This was a result of Colombia’s status (like Mexico) as a cooperating country with the Rockefeller Foundation, which meant that it had the “primary obligation” of helping and sharing, as well as receiving, aid.²⁸ According to Stakman et al, an unidentified Foundation board member compared the Rockefeller agrarian programme with a global military operation in which “a battle line is anchored at both ends by impregnable positions, in this case the programmes in Mexico and Colombia”.²⁹ Yet, those wheat genetics were driven almost to extinction by those same politics of food aid, as discussed in the second chapter.

Key genetic material – wheat lines, as well as more than 3600 specimens of Andean maize germ plasm – was then collected in one of the first operational seed banks in the world in Palmira, Cauca Valley, today home of the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture CIAT, part of the Consortium of

²⁴ “Rockefeller Foundation,” *NACLA Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (April 1969): 21–24.

²⁵ Canuto Cardona, “Informe especial del Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria (DIA),” in *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1959*, by Gilberto Arango Londoño (Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1959), 3–79; República de Colombia, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1961*.

²⁶ IICA, *Asignación de prioridades y recursos a la investigación agropecuaria en Colombia* (Palmira, Colombia: Instituto Interamericano de Cooperación para la Agricultura (IICA), 1978).

²⁷ Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*.

²⁸ Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, 268.

²⁹ Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, 259.

International Agricultural Research Centres, CGIAR.³⁰ This type of ‘paleo-botanic’ seed archive was the alternative established by the scientists when they realised those original and resistant genetics could be lost. As stated by Stakman et al in 1967:

... this program of collecting was undertaken none too soon. Already in parts of Mexico and Colombia the improved varieties and hybrids have replaced the native sorts, some of which are now difficult to find. Another five or ten years and some varieties might have become extinct and their particular combination of genes, the product of centuries of evolution under domestication, forever lost.³¹

The seed-bank was, therefore, the Green Revolution’s solution to save the agrobiodiversity that the same Green Revolution was putting at risk.³² However, also from this bank, genetic crop lines were exported to ‘dozens of countries’ for ‘experimental purposes’ without regard to the rights that the country or the communities that historically cared for these native genetics might had over them. The seed-bank solution has proven highly problematic from a peasant perspective, due to two factors: first, the genetic material saved by various generations of peasant breeders was appropriated by a third party; and second, in the following decades new varieties were developed from research using those genetic lines, and those became the developers’ private property by effect of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) treaty, already in the making in 1961.³³ Therefore, this material was not as accessible to communities as their heirloom seeds used to be. The indigenous and peasant genetics replaced by HYC were almost extinguished, but peasants kept their practice of saving and freely circulating the seeds. As will be seen in the following chapter, in 2010 this custom was threatened by a law aiming to force them to buy certified seeds, which was

³⁰ Bonwoo Koo, Philip G Pardey, and Brian Wright, “CIAT Genebank,” in *Saving Seeds: The Economics of Conserving Crop Genetic Resources Ex Situ in the Future Harvest Centres of the CGIAR* (Wallingford, Oxfordshire, UK; Cambridge, MA: CABI Pub., 2004), 105–25.

³¹ Stakman, Bradfield, and Mangelsdorf, *Campaigns against Hunger*, 263.

³² Helen Anne Curry, “Breeding Uniformity and Banking Diversity: The Genescapes of Industrial Agriculture, 1935-1970,” *Global Environment* 10, no. 1 (April 1, 2017): 83–113.

³³ Jay Sanderson, *Plants, People and Practices: The Nature and History of the UPOV Convention*, Cambridge Intellectual Property and Information Law (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Graham Dutfield, “Turning Plant Varieties into Intellectual Property: The UPOV Convention,” in *The Future Control of Food* (Routledge, 2008).

eventually withdrawn due to the strong rejection provoked in both peasant communities and civil society.

Thousands of different varieties of vegetal material were imported and exported from Colombia in the 1950-60s, and dozens of new varieties were developed, but very few of them resulted in commercial crops.³⁴ The most successful new varieties developed for wheat, rice and potato were tried first in the southwest (Nariño, Valle, Huila) or central regions (Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Boyacá) in the 1960s.³⁵ This was the first stage of the Long Green Revolution in Colombia.

In the sub-regions of study, however, the agro-technological transfer occurred in a second stage, approximately between the late 1960s and early 1980s, and its advance was led by local elites who took advantage of the ideas, training and infrastructure build by the American scientists and funds. This transfer had a technical assistance component, complemented by technological inputs: seeds, synthetic fertilisers and different types of pesticides.

Certified Seeds Regulations

As predicted by Stakman et al in 1967, the new HYC varieties gradually displaced both native seeds – from Latin American pre-Hispanic origin – and creole seeds – brought by Spain during their domination and incorporated by peasantries as heirloom varieties. To historize the Long Green Revolution in Colombia, therefore, seed regulation should be recognised as a critical factor contributing to peasant vulnerability and dependency. These rules were set to prevent peasantries from sharing and reproducing seeds as they traditionally did to preserve their food crops' life cycles. This is an aspect of the Green Revolution that deeply distressed the peasants, who feel that their vocation was originally to reproduce rather than merely to produce and exploit.

New seed developers, such as FEDEARROZ in the 1960s, lobbied vigorously for a system of surveillance to control the use of new genetics once they entered the commercial distribution stage.³⁶ The normative to restrain

³⁴ Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*.

³⁵ Cardona, "Informe especial del Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria (DIA)."

³⁶ Josué López J., "Federación Nacional de Arroceros: Las Semillas de Arroz En Colombia," in *Servicio de Certificación de Semillas: Primera Reunión Anual*, Reunión Anual Servicio de Certificación de Semillas 1 (Palmira, Colombia: Federación Nacional de Arroceros Fedearroz, 1968), 80–88; ICA, *Resoluciones Emitidas Por El ICA Para El Control de Semillas En El País*, 2013, .jpg Infographic, 787x180pixels, 96 dpi, 2013, ica.gov.co/periodico-virtual; FAO, *Políticas*

vegetal material use began with the Decree 140/1965 on seed registration, certification and quality control, and was fully enforced from 1976 when the Colombian Institute of Agriculture (Col-ICA), as sanitary and phyto-sanitary authority, started to develop its own set of regulations.³⁷ The evolution of Col-ICA seed regulation could be broadly divided into two stages.³⁸ The first stage of registration and certification was characterised by peaceful coexistence with free native seeds, while the second stage, which started in the 1990s, obeyed increasingly demanding international commitments. During the second stage, a more intrusive and restrictive regulation was developed, characterised by prohibitions, prosecutions and sanctions associated with the completion of the UPOV obligations.³⁹

Seed breeding in the studied sub-regions has been varied, and has combined formal and informal management styles. It is hard to establish if preserved varieties/genetics are indigenous, native or creole. In fact, it is highly probable that during the first stage of regulation native and creole seeds, as well as new seeds, were intermixed, particularly in the cases of wheat, potato and rice. Additionally, the occurrence of some cross-contamination between different varieties of the same pollinator-dependent species, such as maize, could be expected.⁴⁰ However the overall trend in these sub-regions was that seed breeding resulted in depeasantisation, related to losing peasant agricultural practices and native seeds:

The cultures of our ancestors have been contaminated with these products [seeds]. And it is said that they are sterilised because the first harvest is good but later they no longer produce seed. So, you are forced to buy new seed... while the [seeds] that *criollos* or the natives had, were saved from one year to the next... we had always our own

y Programas de Semillas En America Latina y El Caribe. (Mérida, México: Food & Agriculture Organi, 2001).

³⁷ Presidencia de la República de Colombia, "Decree 140/1965," Pub. L. No. 20, 31587 Diario Oficial. Año CI (1965); ICA, "Resolución No. 1226 de 1976" (1976).

³⁸ The common acronym for the Institute is ICA, but this thesis uses Col-ICA to differentiate it from the International Coffee Agreement ICA.

³⁹ Some of the norms in this stage are: ICA, "Resolución No. 1880 de 1992" (1992); Congress of Colombia, "Law 243/1995," Pub. L. No. 1, Diario Oficial Año CXXXI. N. 42171 4 (1995); ICA, "Resolution ICA 1893 de 1995," Diario Oficial § (1995); ICA, "Resolución No. 3034 de 1999," 43.847 Diario Oficial § (1999); ICA, "Resolución No. 0970 de 2010" (2010).

⁴⁰ Konrad Martin and Joachim Sauerborn, *Agroecology* (Dordrecht ; New York: Springer, 2013).

seeds and kept them. However, new seeds have been brought, those produce only two or three years and then they have to be discarded.⁴¹

Therefore, the Green Revolution functioned as a depeasantising agent.

Fertilised and Toxic Agro-businesses

Although the main component of the Green Revolution was the HYC, there were also dangerous secondary elements in agro-technological packages such as synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. These, in words of the peasants interviewed for this project, were the ‘poisons’ that disrupted biodiversity and existing soil health. Today, the agroecology social movements in Latin America, led by various organised peasantries, also formally refer to these compounds as ‘agro-toxics’.⁴² The term agro-toxic has been highly debated, but it conveys the hazardousness of these substances: pesticides and herbicides which have been deadly to biodiversity as much as to human lives.

Regardless of the healthy production and soil vitality demonstrated by Colombian agroecosystems in the 1950s, the DIA determined that agrarian productivity was low and attributed this to the “poor quality of native seeds”, “soils which lack fertility”, and “plagues and diseases” among others.⁴³ The solutions were, accordingly, to develop higher quality seeds and to instigate the production of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides – both heavily relying on fossil fuel industries which were growing rapidly both in Colombia and Venezuela at the time.⁴⁴ At the same time, experimental farms and extension services promoted the use of toxic compounds such as DDT and Diazinone to manage

⁴¹ *Memories of Participant No.98 Anonymous (Interview 72)*, Santurbán, Recording (Chitagá, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).

⁴² Amanda Richartz et al., “Perception of a rural population on the use of agrotóxicos / Percepção de uma população rural sobre o uso de agrotóxicos,” *Revista de Pesquisa Cuidado é Fundamental Online* 13 (June 14, 2021): 1179–85; Luciana Andrea Moltoni, “Debate agroquímico-agrotóxico: aportes desde el enfoque de construcción social del riesgo,” in *Naturaleza y Conocimientos En Tensión: Aportes al Debate Ambiental Desde Las Ciencias Sociales*, ed. Laura Bombello and Ana Silvia Spivak L’Hoste (Buenos Aires: Teseo Press, 2020); María Elena Martínez-Torres and Peter M. Rosset, “‘Diálogo de saberes’ in La Vía Campesina: Food Sovereignty and Agroecology,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41, no. 6 (November 2, 2014): 979–97.

⁴³ Cardona, “Informe especial del Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria (DIA),” 3.

⁴⁴ This opened a new business niche for the Colombian Petroleum Company Ecopetrol. Fabio Zambrano Pantoja, *Alimentos para la ciudad: historia de la agricultura colombiana*, Primera edición, Colección Ciudades, Estados y Política (Bogotá, D.C: Planeta : Universidad Nacional de Colombia-Sede Bogotá, Instituto de Estudios Urbanos-IEU, 2015).

the rice crops' lepidoptera, and the new potato varieties were also said to require Manzate, Dithane and copper oxychloride.⁴⁵

Additionally, weed killers such as paraquat and glyphosate were proposed by the US government in the 1980s to control illegal crops using aerial spraying.⁴⁶ They were both introduced into Colombian agriculture and peasants were induced to use them, but without due concern for their environmental or health impacts. For example, a 1990 study, commissioned by ICI Agrochemicals, was used, to suggest that although Colombian peasants used paraquat without the required precautions and more training was needed, the impact on their health was minor.⁴⁷ Subsequent studies evidenced that, on the contrary, it has been one of the major causes of poisoning in rural Colombia.⁴⁸ The agrochemical dependency created was such that by 2013 Colombia became one of the main Latin American markets for pesticides made in – but also banned for use in – the European Union.⁴⁹

During the local Green Revolutions, Colombian farmers also became accustomed to generous applications of synthetic fertilisers. Although in the sub-regions consulted, the peasants indicated that they prefer chicken manure as fertiliser, they recognise in potato crops, at least, a high 'need' for synthetic NPK (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium). Statistics show that Colombia became one of the five countries which used the most synthetic fertilisers per hectare and one of the 15 countries which used the most pesticides in total, worldwide.⁵⁰ As figure 11 shows, while there is a global trend to keep a constant

⁴⁵ Cardona, "Informe especial del Departamento de Investigación Agropecuaria (DIA)."

⁴⁶ 96th Congress House of Representatives, "Factfinding Mission to Colombia and Puerto Rico: A Report on the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control," 96th Congress First Session (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1979), US Department of Justice - Office of Justice Programs.

⁴⁷ J.F. Clavijo Porras and M.J. Whitaker, "Uso y manejo de paraquat por pequeños productores de arroz, maíz y papa en Colombia." (Bogotá, Colombia: ICI Agroquímicos de Colombia, 1990), Agrosavia.

⁴⁸ Jefferson Antonio Buendía, Gabriel Jaime Restrepo Chavarriaga, and Andrés F. Zuluaga, "Burden of Paraquat Poisoning in the department of Antioquia, Colombia," *BMC Pharmacology and Toxicology* 20, no. 1 (December 2019): 11; Mateo Marín Cuartas and Marie Claire Berrouet Mejía, "Intoxicación por paraquat," *CES Medicina* 30, no. 1 (June 2016): 114–21; D. Sinisterra, G.J. Restrepo-Chavarriaga, and J.A. Buendia, "PIT12 Cost of Paraquat Poisoning in Colombia," *Value in Health* 22 (May 2019): S213; Elsa Nivia, "Los plaguicidas en Colombia," *Semillas*, April 2004; Catharina Wesseling et al., "Paraquat in Developing Countries," *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* 7, no. 4 (October 2001): 275–86.

⁴⁹ European Parliament. Directorate General for External Policies of the Union., *The Use of Pesticides in Developing Countries and Their Impact on Health and the Right to Food*. (LU: Publications Office, 2021).

⁵⁰ EconStats, "EconStats : Colombia Econ Data. World Bank Data Cf," 2020,

http://www.econstats.com/wdi/wdic_COL.htm; SIC, "Estudio sobre el sector de Plaguicidas en

level of use, or even reduce their use – as in the case of the UK – Colombia has broadly continued to increase its consumption of synthetic fertilisers since the 1980s.

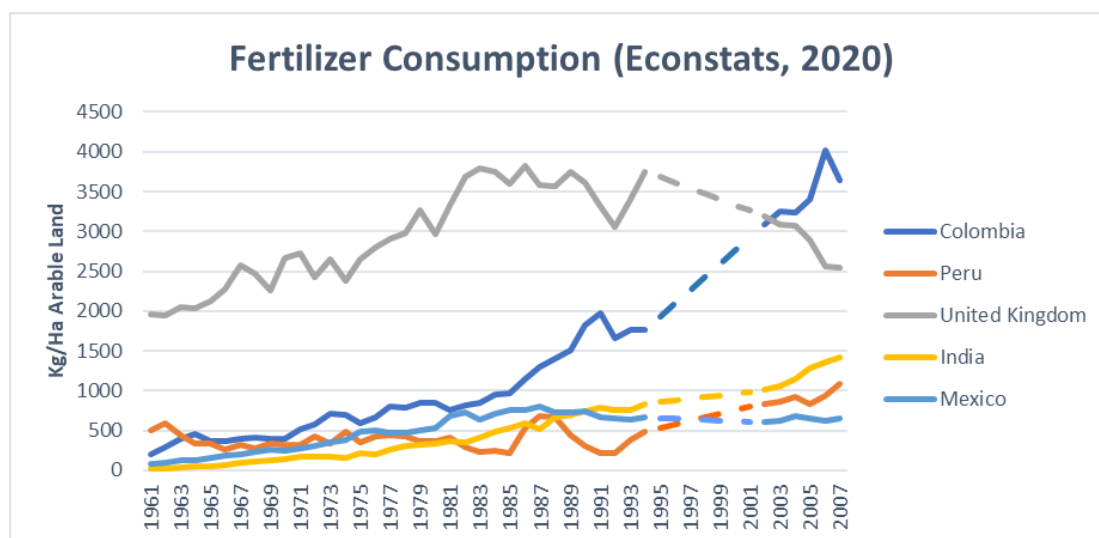


Figure 11. Fertilizer use, comparison of nine countries including Colombia.⁵¹ Please note that dotted segments are linear projections (not original data) aimed to improve the data visualisation.

Both agro-toxics and synthetic fertilisers, among other substances applied to the soil, have been transported in high quantities by runoffs and tillage from agricultural lands to water bodies.⁵² This water is used extensively in rice plantations in Los Montes de María, and as a result peasants report that: “the yucca could no longer be planted next to the rice because the poison killed it ... the herbicide poisoned the water... you could not drink from it anymore, nor take a bath, and the fish died”⁵³ The excessive use of synthetic fertilisers has also aggravated both the erosion caused by slope cropping, and soil depletion due to excess of synthetic nutrients in Andean regions such as the Coffee Axis

Colombia Diciembre 2013,” Estudios Económicos Sectoriales (Bogotá, Colombia: Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio SIC, December 2013), SIC; SIC, “Estudio sobre el sector de Fertilizantes en Colombia Octubre 2013,” Estudios Económicos Sectoriales (Bogotá, Colombia: Superintendencia de Industria y Comercio SIC, October 2013), SIC; Nivia, “Los Plaguicidas En Colombia,” 2004.

⁵¹ EconStats, “EconStats : Colombia Econ Data. World Bank Data Cf.”

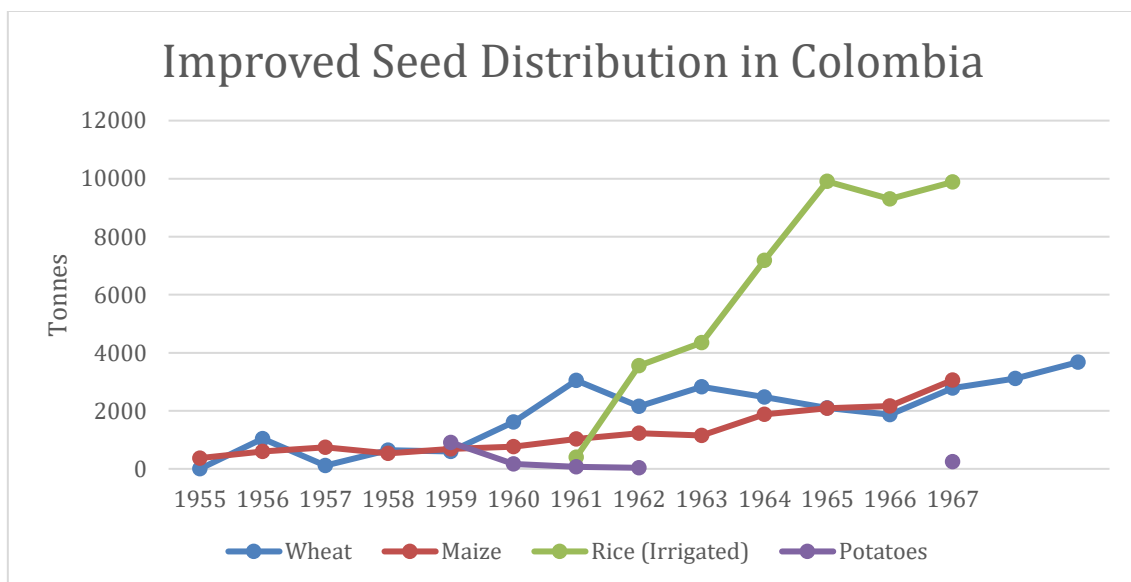
⁵² Natalia Uribe et al., “Impact of Conservation Tillage on Nitrogen and Phosphorus Runoff Losses in a Potato Crop System in Fuquene Watershed, Colombia,” *Agricultural Water Management* 209 (October 2018): 62–72; Nelson Javier Aranguren-Riaño et al., “Sources of Nutrients behind Recent Eutrophication of Lago de Tota, a High Mountain Andean Lake,” *Aquatic Sciences* 80, no. 4 (August 21, 2018): 39; J.D. Otero et al., “Loss of Soil and Nutrients by Surface Runoff in Two Agro-Ecosystems within an Andean Paramo Area,” *Ecological Engineering* 37, no. 12 (December 2011): 2035–43.

⁵³ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

and the Santurbán area. Certainly, some of the most eroded areas of the country are farmed hillsides.⁵⁴ The peasants themselves indicated in the interviews that the soils are continuously 'asking for more'.

From Irrigated Rice to the March of the Avocado

According to the statistics published by Col-ICA in 1970, the first improved seed crop that succeeded commercially in Colombia was irrigated rice – rice being a key staple of the Colombian diet (See figure 12).⁵⁵ This new rice was widely promoted by the rice guild FEDEARROZ through *fomento* campaigns, and by INCORA wherever irrigation projects were facilitated by the SAR and the Alliance for Progress funds. This was the case of the Bolívar 1: the Marialabaja Irrigation District, which has been analysed in earlier chapters in reference to its depeasantising and environmental effects. Other crops had to wait one or two decades to see Green Revolution technological packages implemented in the territories, therefore its impact was felt belatedly in the other two sub-regions studied.



⁵⁴ Euclides Ardila Rueda, “CDMB recuerda sus 49 años de historia ‘frenando’ a la erosión,” *www.vanguardia.com*, October 7, 2014, sec. Área Metropolitana, Bucaramanga, <https://www.vanguardia.com/area-metropolitana/bucaramanga/cdm-b-recuerda-sus-49-anos-de-historia-frenando-a-la-erosion-IQVL281854>; IDEAM, *Estudio nacional de la degradación de suelos por erosión en Colombia 2015* (Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies (Instituto de Hidrología, Meteorología y Estudios Ambientales) -Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible, 2015); IGAC, *Mapa Digital Erosión. Escala 1:500.000. República de Colombia*, 1:500.000 (Colombia: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, 2003).

⁵⁵ ICA, “Estadísticas Agropecuarias: Colombia 1960-1970,” 1970.

Irrigation projects enabled the introduction of improved rice seed. INCORA also injected resources into agro-technology transfer, new research centres and University faculties in the 1960s. Then six years of ANUC actions and land redistribution between 1966-1972 put pressure on the main asset for peasants, land, and channelled resources into land acquisition. However, whilst peasant organisation faded after the Chicoral Pact counter-reform, and land, water, seeds, technical assistance and credit kept flowing to the peasantries under INCORA supervision and following the new rural development directives, *terratendientes'* lands were no longer acquired to be redistributed, and the country mainly relied on *baldíos* to satisfy peasantry claims – implying, from then on, the de-rooting and relocation of families and entire communities.⁵⁷ During the golden years of ANUC, peasants, both collectively and individually, achieved the assignation of territories across Los Montes de María, yet the best irrigated mid-lands went to rice, maize and livestock. In the Bolívar 1 area where the flooded villages of Palo Alto Hicotea and Nomeembromes were located, *criollo* rice had already been a popular commercial crop before the district was created but as part of the project it was replaced by increasingly higher yield rice varieties.⁵⁸

The rice Federation FEDEARROZ mentioned 22 different *criollo* varieties still in use in Colombia in the 1960s, known by their vernacular names such as *Chombo*, *Colecaballo*, *Pigua*, or *Canilla*, although they recognised that there were many more.⁵⁹ Then, more than three thousand genetic lines of rice were brought in from other countries, mainly American types such as Bluebonnet, Rexoro, Zenith, Nato, Gulfrose and Patna, and mixed with *criollo* varieties to create hybrids with resistance to the *hoja blanca* (white leaf) and *sogata* (*Sogatodes Oryzicola*) diseases.⁶⁰ In 1966 Dr. Peter Jennings, breeder of the IR8 semi-dwarf rice variety in Asia, shared this HYC seed with ICA and

⁵⁶ ICA, “Estadísticas Agropecuarias.”

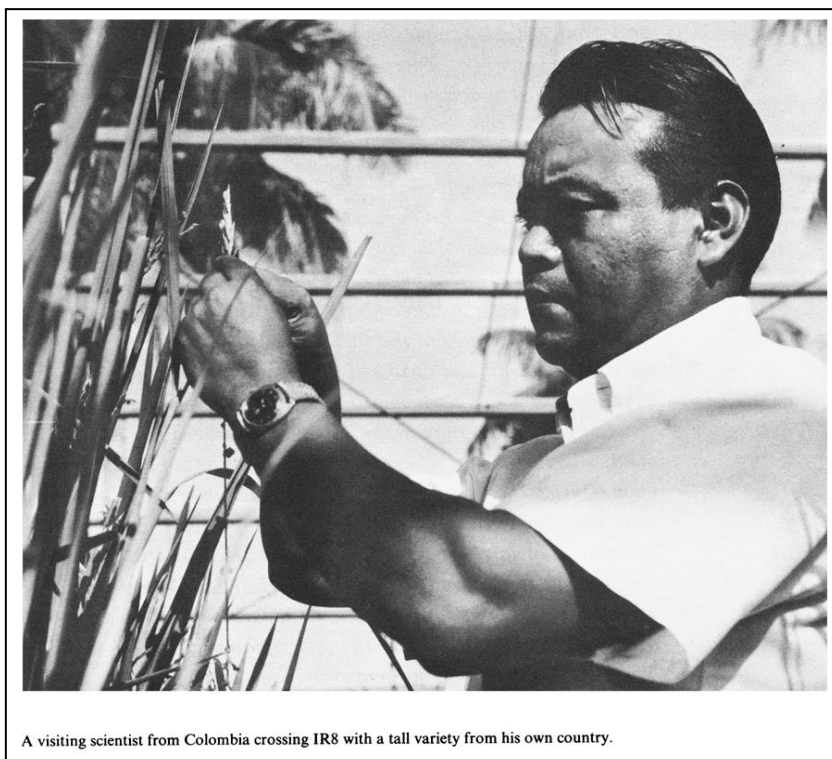
⁵⁷ Marta-Juanita Villaveces-Niño and Fabio Sánchez, “Tendencias históricas y regionales de la adjudicación de baldíos en Colombia,” workingPaper (Universidad del Rosario, February 2015).

⁵⁸ Rice crops covered already 22,000 hectares in the department of Bolívar by 1940. See: Posada Carbó, *The Colombian Caribbean*.

⁵⁹ López J., “Federación Nacional de Arroceros: Las Semillas de Arroz En Colombia.”

⁶⁰ Toro Agudelo, *Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura al Congreso Nacional - 1962*; López J., “Federación Nacional de Arroceros: Las semillas de arroz en Colombia.”

FEDEARROZ, and kick started the rice Green Revolution in Colombia. It then spread from Colombia to the rest of Latin America.⁶¹ The CIAT in Colombia used the IR8 to develop more semi-dwarf varieties such as CICA-4, CICA-8, Oryzica-1, Oryzica-Llanos-4, Oryzica-Llanos-5, and Oryzica-Caribe-8.⁶² FEDEARROZ accompanied this process and in alliance with Col-ICA – which had taken the research functions from DIA – developed and distributed its own seeds.⁶³ Colombian HY rice lines and the scientists who developed them also had missions of their own in other latitudes, with not as much recognition as their American peers, as the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) archives show (see image 11). Although the IRRI usually provided the photo captions with the name of international scientists when a mission of experts was visiting a beneficiary country, in this case, the institute did not acknowledge the name of the Colombian scientist.



⁶¹ D Muñoz and M.J. Rosero, “The Rice Seed Production System in Colombia,” in *Rice Seed Health: Proceedings of the International Workshop on Rice Seed Health, 16-20 March 1987*, ed. IRRI (International Workshop on Rice Seed Health, Manila, Philippines: International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1988), 265–76; Peter Jennings, “Rice Revolutions in Latin America,” April 16, 2007, ricetoday.irri.org/rice-revolutions-in-latin-america; James Lynch and Edward Tasch, *Programa del CIAT para la investigación en arroz de secano en América Latina* (Cali, Colombia: CIMMYT, CIAT, 1981).

⁶² Muñoz and Rosero, “The Rice Seed Production System in Colombia.”

⁶³ Lynch and Tasch, *Programa del CIAT para la investigación en arroz de secano en América Latina*.

Thanks to the development of HY varieties and the simultaneous construction of large irrigation districts such as Marialabaja, Colombian rice yield doubled in just a decade, between 1964 and 1974.⁶⁵

Once the Marialabaja district was fully operational, two groups of peasantries benefited from its reservoirs and have since used them: the local rice growers accommodated by INCORA after their displacement who used and paid for administration of the district, and the peasants remaining in the higher lands who freely navigate and fish in the reservoirs. Also, various urban agricultural investors from many parts of Colombia migrated there to join the beneficiaries of the reform, coming from even as far South as Huila to take advantage of the district.⁶⁶ In the '*Alta Montaña*' (high hills), peasantries' *pancoger*, small commercial cocoa, *ñame*, and/or coffee plantations were placed roughly between the two reservoirs, and also demanded water from these very rich hydrological sources, including their many tributary rivers. Originally, it was the state – through the *Instituto Colombiano de Hidrología, Meteorología y Adecuación de Tierras* (Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies HIMAT) since its creation in 1976 – that administrated the district, charging fees for irrigation services. The rice growers, then organised in cooperatives, were charged in proportion to the extent of their crop. In 1993, however, some functions of HIMAT passed on to the *Instituto Nacional de Adecuación de Tierras* (National Institute for Land Adaptations, INAT), and the state started to gradually delegate the irrigation districts' administration to private associations of users.⁶⁷ This created a tension with neighbouring peasants who use what they considered to be 'their' water in *La*

⁶⁴ IRRI, *AR1966_ColombianScientist*, 1966, .png, 903x815 pixels, 1966, IRRI, ricetoday.irri.org/in-retrospect-irri-annual-report-1966/.

⁶⁵ Rafael Pardo Buelvas, *Proyecciones agropecuarias: Discurso 1974 -1976 Ministerio de Agricultura Anexo - Memoria* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1976).

⁶⁶ Carlos Angulo, "Irrigation districts: agricultural productivity boosters in Colombia. Interview with Carlos Angulo," *Revista de Ingeniería* (Universidad de los Andes, 2016).

⁶⁷ D.L. Vermillion and Carlos Garcés-Restrepo, "IWMI Research Report 25. Impacts of Colombia's Current Irrigation Management Transfer Program," IWMI Research Report (Colombo, Sri Lanka: IWMI, 1998); IIMI, "Privatization and Self Management of Irrigation in Developing Countries: Annual Progress Report for 1994" (Colombo, Sri Lanka: IIMI. Submitted to GTZ by the Local Management Program, IIMI, 1994), IWMI.

Alta Montaña, without paying any administration costs. The water conflict derived from this will be explored more closely in the following chapter.

As far as the industrialising project of HY rice is concerned, these conflicts evidenced another consequence of developmentalist changes proposed by the Green Revolution: the counter-reformist monopolisation of agrarian resources of multiple nature – land, water, and seeds. This is why some peasants remember agrarian development projects as a benefit for *terratenientes* (and/or *acuatenedores*), rather than for peasants as they were advertised and intended by the Alliance for Progress and ECLAC:

Peasant A: ...what Luigi Casanova says as manager of AsoMariaLaBaja is the information they have always provided: that, according to their statutes, the irrigation district was created for the exclusive use of agriculture....”

Peasant B: ...The paradox is that those who should administer the district should be peasant users, with voice and vote to decide; but currently this is not the case, it is actually managed by *terratenientes*, land grabbers who are not peasants.⁶⁸

In lower lands where the irrigation system took waters from the reservoirs, INCORA beneficiary peasants who adopted HYC technology in the 1970s and became part of the irrigation scheme faced their own challenges from a depeasantisation process related to their industrial crops. This was a twofold depeasantisation process: depeasantisation of the countryside, by emptying it of peasants, and depeasantisation by peasantries themselves, who lost food sovereignty and self-sufficiency. The depeasantising extent of Bolívar 1 and its logics of agricultural modernising plans were consistent with Green Revolution values of yield maximisation: industrial monocultures without self-sufficiency but instead indebtedness, dependency on certified seeds and agrochemicals and high water consumption. Through this transition, fathers and mothers’ roles also varied. These ‘urban peasants’ started to live in poor suburbs, the men coming and going to the cropland alone, staying there for some days or weeks if needed and then returning to town to their families. Consequently, there was a significant impact on the labour and culture of peasant women, who were completely de-rooted from their land/Nature,

⁶⁸ *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

becoming urban women in charge of children who no longer learnt from their fathers how to care for their lands. Children no longer went to rural schools or the fields so they could not inherit the peasant culture from their parents.

This transition created a new food security risk: dependency on both rice and agro-input markets, and usurious bank credits. *Montemariano* rice growers enjoyed a decade of high yields which granted them food security through the local market, being able to pay for food but unable to produce it by themselves. However, after the Chicoral Pact counter-reform, with the Alliance fading and the market opening processes that followed the 1989 Washington Consensus, many rice farmers in Los Montes de María went bankrupt, keeping merely land and debts, whilst others lost their land entirely due to debt. After those large investments made by Colombia and other stakeholders such as FEDEARROZ, INCORA, the same peasantries, or ECLAC, the irrigated rice plots proved to be unsustainable and both individuals and organisations were powerless in the face of the collapse of the ISI and the ICA in 1989.⁶⁹ Following the crop failure, machinery assigned as a common good was stripped – presumably for sale – while agrochemicals left the land highly depleted, with water resources also exhausted. As a result of these combined factors, the district’s capacity to provide water to all old and new surrounding monocultures started to decline.

A UNDP study in 2003 included a brief diagnosis of causes of the problems that rice farming faced in the Marialabaja district: lack of technical assistance, lack of roads, unstable climate conditions, high production costs, and poor marketing channels.⁷⁰ Curiously, they also presented peasant agriculture or ‘persistence of some traditional crops’ as a threat to the technified rice, in consideration to such variables as number of hectares and productivity which were ‘stuck’. However, the same study also recognised that:

Crops such as yucca, yams, tobacco, beans, avocado and sugarcane showed a slight increase or are sustained, becoming, in several of the

⁶⁹ Amín Aguirre Alcalá et al., *Historia del distrito de riego de María La Baja - Bolívar: Más motivos para decir que el agua es nuestra* (Bogotá, Colombia: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2016); ECLAC, “Información histórica - evolución de las ideas de la CEPAL” (ECLAC, 2018), https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/pages/files/informacion_historica.pdf.

⁷⁰ “Programa de Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María | El PNUD en Colombia,” UNDP, accessed September 25, 2020, https://www.co.undp.org/content/colombia/es/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/programa-de-desarrollo-y-paz-de-los-montes-de-maria.html.

municipalities of the region, an alternative for the livelihoods of the Montemariano peasant families.⁷¹

As previously discussed, depeasantised families coming from the flooded lands of the district were resettled in ways that made it impossible for them to grow their own food or easily replace monocultural farming practices. As a result, some of these peasants abandoned arable land for pasture to rent it to ranchers.⁷² This was a subsequent process of de-agrarianisation: emptying land from crops. As will be reviewed in the next chapter, after armed conflict and economic opening in the 1990s, this landscape was drastically transformed by bio-fuel and timber agriculture, parallel to a dramatic case of de-peasantisation and de-agrarianisation by violent displacement.

Regarding overexploitation and water depletion, one of the developers of the Bolívar 1 project, Carlos Angulo, recently reflected on his past work in an interview for Los Andes University:

A well-made reservoir is something that works, and there, we engineers are largely to blame (engineers of my generation, above all): we made reservoir projects without adequate environmental studies. We would do the design, and when we were finishing it we would call in some professional who would help us justify projects from a sociological point of view; but we would call him in the end, and that was a mistake on our part.⁷³

Although research about agriculture and peasantries in *Los Montes de María* is abundant, there is a knowledge gap in the quantitative analysis of soil and water depletion in the surroundings of the irrigation district. Recently, Camacho revised what she called ‘toxic accumulation’ caused by the commercial rice crops in a Caribbean sub-region nearby, La Mojana.⁷⁴ She argues that degradation and pollution of soils, water, and biodiversity by toxic agrochemicals in the mechanised rice production were environmental costs and agents of peasant dispossession in this sub-region. This process mirrors the described depeasantisation and de-agrarianisation of areas surrounding the Marialabaja irrigation district. Currently, according to the Geographical Institute

⁷¹ “Programa de desarrollo y paz de los Montes de María | El PNUD en Colombia,” 28.

⁷² *Memories of Participant No.67*; *Memories of Participant No.68*.

⁷³ Angulo, “Irrigation districts,” 3.

⁷⁴ Juana Camacho S., “Toxic Accumulation and Agrifood Dispossession in La Mojana, Colombian Caribbean,” *Revista Colombiana de Antropología* 53, no. 1 (June 2017): 123–50.

IGAC, the Marialabaja irrigation district is among sixteen large districts in Colombia lacking any studies on soils, industrial crop feasibility, or environmental impact whatsoever.⁷⁵ This is an indication that even the proponents of these technological transfer projects can recognise, in retrospect, both their failings and the lessons that need to be learnt.

There is however a remaining gap in terms of accountability for such effects as the 'toxic accumulation', as Camacho's study reveals and as I argue using the case of the avocado trees' disease in Los Montes de María. In this case, yet unresolved, while the government scientific experts have blamed 'natural' causes for the spread of pathogens, peasants hold the Colombian state responsible.

The Avocado March

The dynamics of violence as a counter-reform in Los Montes de María, which will be discussed with more detail in the following chapter, can be summarised in numbers: INCORA's agrarian reform formalised the property-titles of thousands of peasants, covering more than 134,000 hectares of land in Sucre and Córdoba from 1960-80s. Between 1997 and 2007 about two thirds of those peasants were dispossessed by the armed conflict.⁷⁶ Once the conflict was over, some peasantries returned. The *Alta Montaña* peasantries who did, found their avocado trees – which were low-maintenance permanent forests – dying or dead already. Since then, they have sought explanations to the mystery of their decay. Local scientists have been providing partial answers, but peasantries have their own theories based on the violence they endured, including the Green Revolution depeasantisation.

Since 2013, Agrosavia, formerly Corpoica the research arm of Col-ICA, has been researching the mysterious mass death of avocado trees in the *Alta Montaña*, a process which has severely disrupted local ecologies and agricultural production. Agrosavia has already determined that the devastating

⁷⁵ Juan Antonio Nieto Escalante, "Producción agropecuaria en los grandes distritos de riego de Colombia ha sido improvisada: IGAC," gov, *Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi IGAC* (blog), March 20, 2017, igac.gov.co/es/noticias/produccion-agropecuaria-en-los-grandes-distritos-de-riego-de-colombia-ha-sido-improvisada.

⁷⁶ Tania Rodríguez Triana, "Caracterización de los conflictos territoriales en la región de Montes de María," in *Desencuentros territoriales: caracterización de los conflictos en las regiones de la Atillanura, Putumayo y Montes de María*, ed. Carlos Duarte et al., Primera edición, Terrenos Etnográficos (Bogotá, D.C: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2015), 275–343.

infestation was caused by the oomycete fungus called *phytophthora cinnamomi*, which might have been present in the soil but became more active and invasive as a result of agroecological disruption. The factors behind the emergence and continued spread of this fungus and the mass death of the tress remain undefined. The comment among peasants is that soil depletion and pollution might have been caused by the high use of toxic agrochemicals in the surrounding area.⁷⁷ Agrosavia's investigations however, according to the anonymous information provided by one of its researchers, still fail to use participative, interdisciplinary and decolonial approaches to develop a complete diagnosis of the problem. Instead, having what should be an interdisciplinary research project conducted only by biological scientists might have led to contradiction and misrepresentation of the peasants' testimonies.⁷⁸

The nuances offered by peasants' insights regarding the avocado crops are very rich. For example, they highlight the robustness and lack of need for human management these agroforests exhibited. The *Alta Montaña*, where multiple rivers which feed the Matuya and El Playón reservoirs are born, used to hold successful shaded coffee crops grown under the shadow of *guamo*, *matarratón* and avocado trees, until around the 1970s.⁷⁹ According to studies made by the *Banco de la República*, the *Montemariano* avocado started to be commercialised in the cities nearby at this time.⁸⁰ Then, when FEDECAFÉ promoted the replacement of shaded coffee and the rust arrived in the 1980s, this production was discouraged. In the meantime, avocados continued to reproduce naturally, producing abundant sellable fruit. Apparently, peasants did not actually cultivate the trees: "the seed [fruit] fell, the animal ate the excess, the seed was born, and another tree was made".⁸¹ Peasants became avocado 'collectors'. The *Montemariano* avocado is not only tasty, but unlike the popular Hass, is also quite large, low-maintenance and well-adapted to warm

⁷⁷ Becerra Becerra et al., *Un bosque de memoria viva: desde la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar*, *Memories of Participant No.48 Dionisio Alarcón (Interview 37)*, Los Montes de María, Recording (El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019), 71; *Memories of Participant No.71 Anonymous (Interview 48)*, Los Montes de María, Recording (Sincelejo, Sucre, 2019).

⁷⁸ *Memories of Participant No.71*.

⁷⁹ Becerra Becerra et al., *Un bosque de memoria viva: desde la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar*.

⁸⁰ María Aguilera Díaz, *Montes de María: una subregión de economía campesina y empresarial*, Documentos de Trabajo Sobre Economía Regional 195 (Cartagena, Colombia: Banco de la República, 2013).

⁸¹ Becerra Becerra et al., *Un bosque de memoria viva: desde la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar*, 271.

temperatures.⁸² It therefore became a successful and profitable commercial alternative. The *Montemariano* avocado became so famous that it was sold more in the big cities, Cartagena, Barranquilla, Medellín than in El Carmen de Bolívar itself.⁸³ This is why, when peasants survived the violent displacement of the 1990s and returned to find their precious avocado trees dying or already dead, the communities had one more reason to be devastated: the impossibility of rebuilding their livelihoods. On top of this, the preliminary studies made by Corpoica seemed to blame the peasants, who were actually the victims, stating that: “as a consequence of the abandonment of crops, a serious biological problem developed”.⁸⁴

These successive mistreatments led the desperate peasantries to organise the 2013 massive ‘Avocado March’ to Cartagena, to claim their rights as victims. The march was interrupted by government officials, who acted quickly to meet their demands, including research to diagnose the causes of the avocados’ death and, finally, develop solutions to recover the crops. The archive evidences that in fact this problem was previously identified in 2009, but it was poorly addressed by the public institutions in charge until the peasantries demanded urgent intervention in 2013.⁸⁵ Subsequently, these peasants received support from the CNMH for the writing of their own memoirs, the visit of Agrosavia’s researchers, and the assistance of USAID and the botanical garden of Cartagena, among other forms of reparation and amendments.⁸⁶ Regarding the avocado disease, however, the historical memory published by the CNMH and preliminary scientific findings diverge. At the time of this project’s research fieldwork, Agrosavia had no published results, but an Agrosavia researcher interviewed for this project confirmed that the avocados’ death could be explained by a combination of factors such as the presence of

⁸² Javier Yabrudy Vega, “El aguacate en Colombia: estudio de caso de Los Montes de María, en el Caribe Colombiano,” *Documentos de Trabajo Sobre Economía Regional* 171 (August 22, 2012): 1–42.

⁸³ El Tiempo, “El aguacate: verde esperanza de los carmeros,” *El Tiempo*, May 20, 1995, El Tiempo OL.

⁸⁴ Yabrudy Vega, “El aguacate en colombia: estudio de caso de Los Montes de María, en el Caribe Colombiano,” 8.

⁸⁵ Wilson López Tovar, “Aguacate de Los Montes de María atacado por una plaga,” *El Universal*, September 26, 2009, sec. Economía, El Universal; ICA, “ICA impulsa plan para erradicar 6000 árboles de aguacate en Montes de María: plantaciones viejas y cambio climático pueden estar asociados a hongo del aguacate,” *Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA)*, December 10, 2009, ica.gov.co/noticias.

⁸⁶ Fieldwork observations

termites due to the inadequate wood use, the *phytophthora cinnamomi* oomycete, the trees' age, abandonment due to the armed conflict, and climate change – the latter being key.⁸⁷ According to their testimony, the soils of Los Montes de María are highly vulnerable, and require urgent transitions to sustainable agronomic management and good practices. They ruled out the possibility that a third party may have chemically poisoned the land, as some peasants believe, viewing the action of such 'a responsible party' as a myth.⁸⁸

On the other hand, this myth emerged as a result of peasants witnessing fumigations and aerial spraying. Thus, an explanation was formed organically: the authorities suspected guerrillas were hiding under the avocado trees and poisoned them. Although an ex-soldier interviewed confirmed spraying near the area, this version seems highly unlikely, since there is no record of illicit crops in the *Alta Montaña* which would justify spraying.⁸⁹ The idea of 'planting' fungi to attack illicit crops also sounds preposterous. However, an unclassified CIA document, in fact, confirms experimentation proving it as an effective 'potential' but expensive biocontrol – in comparison with alternatives such as viruses.⁹⁰ This is merely to point out that these peasants' notions are not as implausible as we might suppose. Nevertheless, they do seem highly unlikely.

A factor unmentioned by the Agrosavia research, but which emerges strongly from peasant testimonies, is the link between non-renewal of trees and biodiversity loss. Several interviewees mentioned a considerable reduction in biodiversity following the building of dams and spread of industrial crops. Many renowned scholars, following Carson, have extensively documented the impact of agrochemicals on insect and bird populations.⁹¹ Since such animals 'sow' the seed through their food cycle, the absence of these might also partially explain the lack of younger trees.

In any case, the *Alta Montaña* peasant community's consensus within their multiple 'explanations' points at the monocrops as key contaminants, and at the Colombian state as being responsible for years of war in the region which

⁸⁷ *Memories of Participant No.71.*

⁸⁸ *Memories of Participant No.67.*

⁸⁹ *Memories of Participant No.60 Anonymous (Interview 46), Los Montes de María, Recording (San Juan de Nepomuceno, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).*

⁹⁰ Richard Kerr, "Letter to Bill Bradley from Richard J. Kerr Re Questions about the Use of Virus," CREST, June 5, 1989, (FOIA) /ESDN (CREST): 0000700738, CIA FOIA Electronic Reading Room.

⁹¹ Carson, *Silent Spring.*

included stigmatization and persecution of peasants. In other words, there is evidence to suggest that the state bears some responsibility for facilitating the spread of *phytophthora cinnamomi* in Los Montes de María.

In this case, the CNMH and Alta Montaña peasants' participatory research contrasts with Agrosavia's studies and explanations for the avocado disease. These tensions illustrate a lack of decolonial approaches in scientific studies about food security threats, which date back to the conception of the Green Revolution: there has been a continuous underestimation and rejection of peasant knowledge. Scientific analyses not only blamed the victims, both peasantries and Nature, but also avoided difficult dialogues regarding how environmental damage, such as the biodiversity loss caused by the agrarian industrialisation and depeasantisation of Los Montes de María, might be associated with or have contributed to the creation of conditions that facilitated the Avocado fungus' advance. There are other unmistakable factors such as armed conflict and climate change, which also exacerbated the social and environmental injustices endured by these peasantries (as will be explored in the next chapter). The rumours about the army planting the fungus evidenced the mistrust and fear of power abuse. Clearly, explanations that hold peasants responsible for 'abandonment' of their lands and lack of technique are short-sighted, and reveal that in the study of agro-ecosystems and rural welfare, interdisciplinarity, participatory methods and decolonial approaches are required to effectively analyse developments, rather than simply relying on extant economic, development sciences and yield-based approaches.

These experiences have strengthened the Afro-peasant communities in Los Montes de María, who have demonstrated admirable resilience and courage despite being under siege from extractive monocultures and armed violence. They have posed wider resistance to the Green Revolution's technological transference, defending peasant traditions and territories. This contrasts strongly with the coffee zone, where coffee growers aligned themselves with the changes proposed by the paternalistic FEDECAFÉ.

The *guamo* Curse: Coffee Deforestation and Crisis

[When] The Caturra [coffee] had not yet been established... [The] arabica coffee yielded late fruits and the peasant had subsistence crops. There were great harvests of bananas, yucca, arracacha, fruit trees, etc. The marketplace

was filled with abundant staples with no buyers, since most of the dwellers with purchasing power were smallholders and had what they needed... It was a paradise for the town's inhabitants, who worked little and ate for free. But one day the peasant no longer planted, sold the land to his wealthy neighbour, and came to the city. The rich changed the arabica coffee for Caturra and there were no more plantains to give away and no more yucca to throw away."⁹²

There was a period when coffee income was sufficient to fully meet the needs of what is known as the coffee social fabric in the Coffee Axis – coffee owners, managers, workers, women, families. This period was known as the 'bonanza'. For the growers it was perceived as a fair market context with the fortunate coincidence, for Colombia, of yearly frosts in Brazil from 1974 until 1980 which triggered an abnormal international demand.⁹³ These factors influenced an unusually high currency inflow. Almost simultaneously, FEDECAFÉ had started to combat the "problem of peasant mentality" by promoting the replacement of "traditional" shaded Arabica coffee trees with the dwarf HY Caturro, or Caturra, coffee variety from 1965.⁹⁴ Under the leadership of the patriarchal authority of the Federation, coffee growers were instructed not only to cut down the forest layer they kept above the Arabica trees, but also every other crop they cultivated on their lands, which were many and diverse – as the opening quote explains. Many areas of the Coffee Axis were transformed collectively in a large homogeneous 'green desert' of Caturra trees as part of the programme of 'intensification' and 'technification':

The same Federation ordered to finish the shade to sow those modern coffees... they said that in an Arabica you could fit four Caturros. But the four Caturros, no matter how much they give, never gave as much as an Arabica... when they took down the coffee with shade and all the *guamos* and *churimos*, they took down everything, leaving the lots peeled, empty. Then the water dried up and we had to go and plant trees there, so that water could be produced again for that path.⁹⁵

FEDECAFÉ created an empire during those wealthy years, thanks to the ICA, more intensive coffee growing and the hard work of many coffee peasant

⁹² Hernando López López, *Memorias de las galerías* (Manizales, Caldas [Colombia]: Imprenta Departamental de Caldas, s.f.), 21,22.

⁹³ Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos generales del café*.

⁹⁴ Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850–1970*, 1980, 239.

⁹⁵ *Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview)*.

families. It owned a bank, an international merchant fleet, an insurance carrier, a building society, a fertiliser industry, a logistics company, a 'Coffee College', a freeze-dried coffee factory, and a research centre, Cenicafé.⁹⁶ However, at peasantry and landscape levels, there were further repercussions which included the higher vulnerability of crops and food insecurity.

In this section, this chapter demonstrates that the coffee Green Revolution emerged at significant social and environmental costs. Firstly, it promoted deforestation, increasing GHG emissions, changing water and soil dynamics, causing erosion and endangering regional biodiversity, with a particular heavy impact on bird life.⁹⁷ Secondly, it resulted in the demise of food self-sufficiency – both at family and regional level – since not only did the *pancoger* disappear but also many other products ceased to be sown locally. Thirdly, coffee growers became entirely dependent on market prices of imported agrarian supplies they previously did not use – just as their *Montemarianos* peers in the north were, with the HY rice. This is disadvantageous because of increases in costs due to currency exchange. Fourthly, crop homogenisation made their farms more vulnerable to pathogens.

This last consequence, highlighted by coffee growers interviewed who recalled their personal experience, supports recent scientific publications which associate the advance of pathogens with the increasing intensification of monocultures formed by genetically identical individuals.⁹⁸ Observations made by various scholars, organisations, and farmers' movements around the world concur in linking the abrupt transition from rotational diverse agricultural systems to the Green Revolution monocultures with destabilisation of ecosystems, increasing the vulnerability to new and existing pathogens.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Francisco Rodríguez Vargas, "Las organizaciones del sector cafetero colombiano," *Innovar* 0, no. 7 (January 1, 1996): 7–26.

⁹⁷ Ivette Perfecto and John H. Vandermeer, *Coffee Agroecology: A New Approach to Understanding Agricultural Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services, and Sustainable Development* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2015).

⁹⁸ *Memories of Participant No. 1; Memories of Participants No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 (Collective Interview); Memories of Participant No. 16; Memories of Participant No. 29 Anonymous (Interview 22), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Naranjal, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No. 35 Anonymous (Interview 28), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Circasia, Quindío, Colombia, 2019).

⁹⁹ R.B Singh, "Environmental Consequences of Agricultural Development: A Case Study from the Green Revolution State of Haryana, India," *Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment* 82, no. 1–3 (December 2000): 97–103; David Pimentel and Marcia Pimentel, "Comment: Adverse Environmental Consequences of the Green Revolution," *Population and Development Review* 16 (1990): 329.

Additionally, higher host density and a narrow genetic pool are two factors which favour the spread of pathogens.¹⁰⁰ In this case study of the Coffee Axis, I analyse the two main pathogens that emerged in the 1980s in parallel with coffee technification: coffee leaf rust and coffee berry borer beetle or coffee beetle.

The connection between the coffee Green Revolution and the coffee rust caused by the *hemileia vastratix* fungus has been widely discussed by various scholars, including recently by the environmental historian Stuart McCook. He argues that it was not only the local coffee research institute which brought plant-breeding and the development of new varieties in response to US aid policies and the ICA, but also that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) instigated, financed and 'shaped' this Green Revolution.¹⁰¹ However, regardless of this neo-colonial intervention, the colonial legacies within the paternalist Federation's accountability cannot be overlooked. The massive deforestation of the coffee landscape could be the biggest transformation of this agroecosystem since the arrival of the *colono* peasantries two centuries before, and the most well-remembered change in the collective memory of peasants interviewed as part of this research. The testimonies collected for this research in 2019 suggested that the main driver of deforestation was the coffee elites' ambition to take advantage of pact prices and Brazil's droughts, and to thereby feed the funds of the Federation and the departmental committees. Notably, some of the participants in this research project also show regret for their own ambition inspired by FEDECAFÉ.

¹⁰⁰ On the impact of plant density on the transmission of diseases, see: J J Burdon and G A Chilvers, "Host Density as a Factor in Plant Disease Ecology," *Annual Review of Phytopathology* 20, no. 1 (September 1982): 143–66; Bruce A. McDonald and Eva H. Stukenbrock, "Rapid Emergence of Pathogens in Agro-Ecosystems: Global Threats to Agricultural Sustainability and Food Security," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 371, no. 1709 (December 5, 2016): 20160026; Prabhu L. Pingali et al., "Confronting the Environmental Consequences of the Green Revolution in Asia," 1994. On the impact of a narrow genetic pool on the transmission of diseases, see: K C King and C M Lively, "Does Genetic Diversity Limit Disease Spread in Natural Host Populations?," *Heredity* 109, no. 4 (October 2012): 199–203; Youyong Zhu et al., "Genetic Diversity and Disease Control in Rice," *Nature* 406, no. 6797 (August 2000): 718–22; C. C. Mundt, "Use of Multiline Cultivars and Cultivar Mixtures for Disease Management," *Annual Review of Phytopathology* 40, no. 1 (September 2002): 381–410.

¹⁰¹ McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever*; McCook.

The Great Deforestation

The first 'Juan Valdez' campaign TV commercials were produced by FEDECAFÉ as part of their campaign to turn the mandatory marker of origin '100% Colombian coffee' into a globally prestigious brand, and these commercials are a valuable source for extraordinary and rare video footage of 1970s coffee landscapes. At the time, the idea was to create the brand association between Colombian origin coffee and the highest quality coffee by advertising the specific production conditions that made the 1970s coffee zone special: the flavour enhanced by *guamo* – or any fruit – trees' shadow upon the Arabica coffee trees that were grown among subsistence crops; the sound of the birds' diversity; and even the manual labour required to obtain the soft and aromatic roasted grains. The commercial stated:

To the people of Colombia South America, the sun is not just a fair-weather friend. All year on, it keeps the air as mild as spring. For the coffee trees of Juan Valdez, it is the best climate in the world. The branches grow strong and full and fragrant with flowers. Until the green berries appear, tall guamos' trees filter the sun, as the coffee beans grow delicious with flavour...¹⁰²

This footage provides useful insights into coffee growers' feelings and romanticism around their agroforestry farms and its idyllic aspects, as well as explaining why the subsequent drastic change suffered by the coffee landscape had such an impact on peoples' spirits. The sense memories of participants of this research were strongly framed around recollections of the sounds of birds, cicadas and dry leaf litter, and the textures, shadows, smells and tranquillity emanating from the coffee forests.¹⁰³ Image 12 shows an Arabica coffee agroforestry with *guamo* trees on top. Image 13a evidences each of those Arabica trees was considerably higher than an average size person. Furthermore, the image 13b of a contemporary Caturra plantation demonstrate that it is denser and shorter.

¹⁰² The video mentioned is the reference: FEDECAFÉ, *Historic Films: SF-1085*, HF-YTV, 1969, <https://youtu.be/IXDzkhtlaqQ>.

¹⁰³ *Memories of Participant No.16; Memories of Participant No.28 Anonymous (Interview 22)*, *Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Naranjal, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).



Image 12. Arabica crops and guamo trees, photo from the archives of the University of Florida¹⁰⁴



Image 13. Size comparison of Arabica coffee tree with Caturra.
 A: Arabica tree in Torre Abbey, Torquay. B: Caturra trees in Chinchiná, Colombia.

The coffee technology transfer, as with rice or potato crops, was led by the Federation and based on the developments led by its research branch, Cenicafé, which was aided by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and both used ideas and trained personnel as facilitated by years of American food aid and philanthropic missions.¹⁰⁵ FEDECAFÉ monopolised coffee development

¹⁰⁴ *Coffee Plot under Shade Trees, Medellín, Colombia, 1945*, Photograph, 1945, Digital Library of the Caribbean, University of Florida, dloc.com/UF00019105/00001.

¹⁰⁵ McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever*.

in Colombia, if not the entire world, such was its influence in this period. The Federation, as father of the great 'coffee family', controlled the means and took decisions vertically. It conducted research through Cenicafé with its Chinchiná farm, and managed all experimental programmes and training centres as well as extension, seedlings distribution and commercial channels. Despite the American influence, coffee's Green Revolution and deforestation – and its consequences – were to a very significant extent actually 'made in Colombia'.

The decimation of shaded coffee not only affected the local topsoil, but also considerably reduced the presence of birds and mammals, and facilitated the spread of plant diseases. According to the peasant movement *Unión Cafetera*, by the 1980s already about half of the cultivated land had been cleared of fruit trees and all shaded coffee was replaced with Caturra.¹⁰⁶ In 1982 Cenicafé developed the first seedlings of the rust-resistant variety called Colombia, obtained from hybrids between the African dwarf coffees Caturra and Catimor.¹⁰⁷ The Caturra plots, when aging, would be then replaced by the Colombia variety to control the fungus that arrived in 1983. In 1990 however, shortly after the end of the ICA, the borer beetle appeared in the Coffee Axis, with devastating effects. Despite Cenicafé/FEDECAFÉ efforts to combat the beetle and changes to coffee varieties being grown, by the time of the 1997 National Coffee Survey seventy-five per cent of the cropped area in Colombia was infected by either one or both pathogens – leaf rust or borer beetle.¹⁰⁸

By the 1990s Colombian coffee growers were no longer protected by the pact, the sun-grown coffee had left an enormous environmental impact, and on top of that, the taste of the new hybrid varieties was considered to have 'poor cup quality' according to the most influential baristas, which damaged Colombian coffee's most valuable asset, the high-quality reputation of its *criollo* production.¹⁰⁹ A popular saying emerged: whenever Colombian people have a series of misfortunes in a row, they say "*Nos cayó la roya*" (The rust came upon us!).

The scientific literature still seems divided into those arguing for positive outcomes of the shift from shaded to sun-grown coffee, and those evidencing its

¹⁰⁶ Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos generales del café*.

¹⁰⁷ León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017*.

¹⁰⁸ Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos generales del café*.

¹⁰⁹ James Hoffmann, *The World Atlas of Coffee: From Beans to Brewing - Coffees Explored, Explained and Enjoyed*, 2018.

negative impacts. Andrés Guhl, in an environmental historical study made for Cenicafé about the intensification of coffee growing and cultivated hectares of land, argues that it had a positive effect.¹¹⁰ Guhl based his observations on the coffee censuses of 1970, 1980-81, and 1993-97, indicating that total land cultivated with the so-called ‘technified coffee’ went from 0.22 per cent to 34.14 per cent and 70.04 per cent in Colombia.¹¹¹ To Guhl, crop intensification reduced the total area used, freeing space for other sustainable uses, such as pastures or forests. However, Guhl worked with data that presented inconsistencies, and this flaw in his methodology meant that he was misled by inconsistent data in reaching his positive conclusions. A 2014 report made for Geodata for Agriculture and Water (G4AW) showed that there were inconsistencies between different methodologies followed in each different coffee census and surveys conducted during the twentieth century. None of these used the same sample or method (Figure 13). In 1955, a sampling was done by FAO; in 1970, a farm-to-farm survey; and in 1980 a photointerpretation study.¹¹² Therefore, I argue that the figures used by Guhl for Cenicafé and FEDECAFÉ may not be entirely conclusive.

¹¹⁰ Andrés Guhl, “Café y cambio de paisaje en la zona cafetera colombiana entre 1970 y 1997,” *Cenicafé* 55, no. 1 (September 1, 2004): 29–44; Andrés Guhl, “Coffee Production Intensification and Landscape Change in Colombia, 1970-2002,” in *Land Change Science in the Tropics* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2008), 93–116.

¹¹¹ Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, “Estadísticas Cafeteras,” Statistics (Bogotá, Colombia: Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 2020), <https://federaciondefcafeteros.org/wp/estadisticas-cafeteras/>; María Errazúriz, “Evolución del empleo cafetero en Colombia 1970-1985,” *Coyuntura Económica* 17, no. 3 (1987): 129–56.

¹¹² FEDECAFÉ, “‘GEO – SIC@’: Servicios Satelitales de Información Cafetera Para La Sostenibilidad Rural En Colombia” (Geodata for Agriculture and Water (G4AW), Bogotá, Colombia, May 2014).

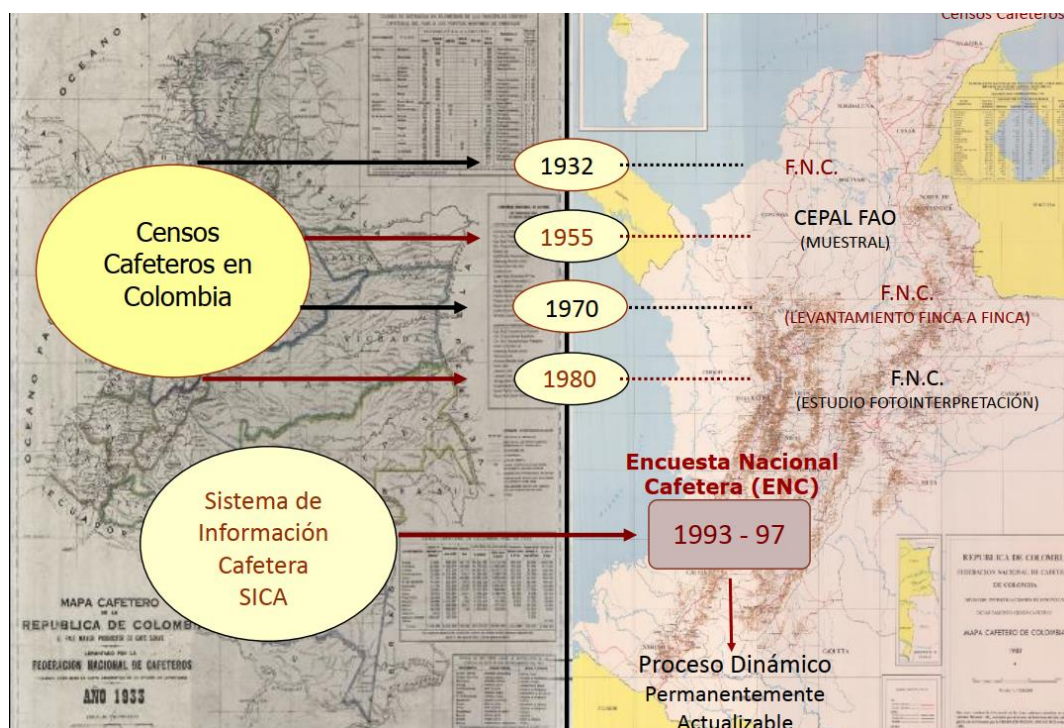


Figure 13. Differences in the Coffee Census by FEDECAFÉ. FEDECAFÉ shows different methodologies used in their Coffee Census in 1932, 1955, 1970, and 1980 when they announced the acquisition of its georeferenced system to keep more accurate statistics.¹¹³

In contrast with Guhl’s argument for the apparent advantages achieved with intensified coffee production, studies by Ortiz, Borrero, and Douma et al. highlight the environmental damage and impact on biodiversity caused by the coffee varieties’ transition.¹¹⁴

A third point of view comes from the peasantries themselves: the testimonies collected by this research confirm that after the technification of coffee growing, various changes occurred in land use. These were however not related to resource release, as Guhl formulated, but rather to reduced agrodiversity and a loss of adaptability – which, with the end of the ICA, led to ‘crisis bankruptcy’.¹¹⁵ The coffee grower peasantries were forced then into

¹¹³ Taken from FEDECAFÉ’s presentation to G4AW. See note 112.

¹¹⁴ Ana Patricia Ortiz, *Sombríos y caturrales del Líbano-Tolima: transformación y crisis ecológica de un paisaje cafetero : análisis metodológico y cartografía integrada* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi, 1989); José Ignacio Borrero H, “La substitución de cafetales de sombrío por caturrales y su efecto negativo sobre la fauna de vertebrados,” *Caldasia* 15, no. 71–75 (July 1, 1986): 725–32; Willy Douma, Heleen Van Den Homberg, and Ange Wieberdink, “The Politics of Research on Gender Environment,” in *Feminist Perspectives on Sustainable Development*, ed. Wendy Harcourt and Society for International Development (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Zed Books, in association with Society for International Development, Rome, 1994), 176–86.

¹¹⁵ *Memories of Participant No.34 Anonymous (Interview 27), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Filandia, Quindío, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.35*.

adopting alternative uses for these highly exploited lands. A wider pattern can be discerned in these transitions, as, just like some their peers in Los Montes de María and Santurbán, coffee farmers sought the transformation of arable plots into grasslands which offered a most immediate solution. Although there is still a predominance of coffee farms in the sub-region, the Coffee Axis was no longer the core of national coffee production. Many coffee farms were transformed into dairy or double-purpose livestock farms, or more recently turned to tourism to survive. In conclusion, the transformation of the coffee landscape can be summed up as the transition from a highly biodiverse agroforestry to a medium-size monoculture, and gradually in some areas to grazing.

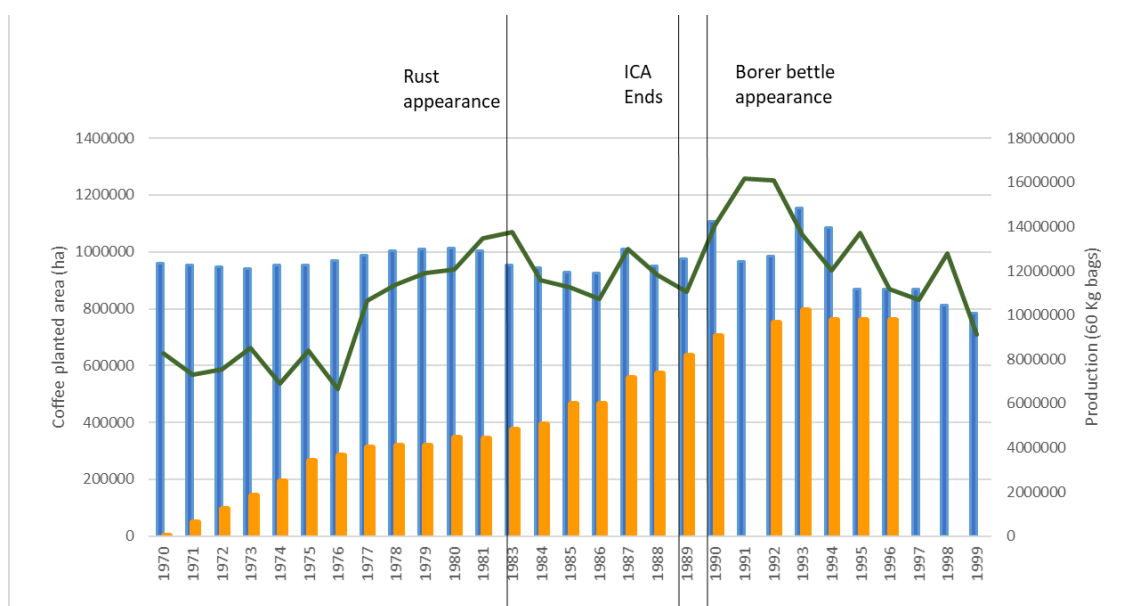


Figure 14. Coffee production in Colombia against area sown traditionally and technified (1970-1999). Source: Author's own based on Guhl, FEDECAFÉ, Col-ICA and Ministry of Agriculture Stats.¹¹⁶

Although the data is incomplete and inconsistent, it could be said that the evolution of the coffee production deaccelerated after the Green Revolution with three events. First, the appearance of rust; secondly of the berry borer; and thirdly, the end of the international coffee pact, as the graph in figure 14, shows. The green line corresponds to the gross production expressed in bags (usually of 60 kg). The area cultivated is shown in bars, the total cultivated area in blue

¹¹⁶ Guhl, "Coffee Production Intensification and Landscape Change in Colombia, 1970-2002"; Errazúriz, "Evolución del empleo cafetero en Colombia 1970-1985"; Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, "Estadísticas Cafeteras"; Pardo Buelvas, *Memorias 1974-1975, 1975*; ICA, "Estadísticas agropecuarias."

bars and technified coffee production area in orange bars.¹¹⁷ Data between 1970 and 1985 are taken from information that FEDECAFÉ provided in 1986 for worker demand estimates prepared for the Errázuriz Employment Mission. From 1986 to 1994, the census data has been reconstructed from information in publications by the Federation and the Coffee Union. The data suggest a gradual cultivation increase up to the 1993/95 census (used by Guhl) that shows the decrease in cultivated area. However, despite intensification coming with the development of sun-grown coffee, there has also been a decline in production since 1993 – exactly four years after the end of the pact, according to FEDECAFÉ and the Ministry of Agriculture’s data. It is important to remember, while reading this graph, that coffee is a long cycle crop, and that therefore either stimulation or discouragement of production is reflected between three and five years after the sowing. Production increase and peak, for example, corresponds to sowings of about five years before. Thus, it is highly probable that the production drop in 1993 reflects sowing discouragement from five years earlier. This coincides with the end of the Cold War, the end of the coffee pact, market liberalisation, price destabilisation, and the appearance of the borer beetle, a year after. Evidently, the peasant ‘coffee crisis’ can be also proved using qualitative methods by analysing statistics.

The Aftermath of the Coffee Bonanza

By definition, a crisis is a limited time of extreme difficulty. However, coffee growers in Colombia seem to have been stuck in a perpetual state of ‘crisis’ since 1989. Although Colombia strongly defended the ICA during the 1989 negotiations in London, the ICA was terminated, triggering the release of stock held by producing countries.¹¹⁸ As a result, the prices dropped dramatically, and as seen above, planting was discouraged. At a national level, the coffee sector in Colombia after 1989 seemed to be in denial of the change in free market prices and failed to adapt to this new normality, almost as if they were waiting for a round of protectionist intervention at global scale like that seen during the Cold War. Bonanza and crisis, as experienced by peasants, were events with

¹¹⁷ Where there are no orange bars, the data is incomplete

¹¹⁸ “Colombia and the International Coffee Agreement” (December 1, 1982), FCO 7/4348, The National Archives, Kew; “Colombia: Coffee; the International Coffee Agreement” (December 1, 1984), FCO 7/5735, The National Archives, Kew.

reformist and counter-reformist effects. However, while the bonanza was the result of extraordinary natural events, such as the extreme Brazilian frosts (albeit compounded by the ICA), the crisis was entirely man-made. It was caused not only by the subjugation of a long-cycle crop to the commoditisation and price volatility by breaking the pact, but also by the Green Revolution. Although the whole sector suffered when the ICA broke up in 1989, the harm done was experienced disproportionately by the families who depended on coffee growing rather than the Federation and its elite members.

Most of the coffee empire's assets and enterprises– the insurance company, the Coffee Bank, the merchant fleet – had to be sold or liquidated between 1996 and 1999, but FEDECAFÉ is still responsible for a gigantic pension liability which relies on current parafiscal funds that all coffee growers cover by selling their product at today's meagre price.¹¹⁹ Since the early 1990s the grower-members of the Coffee Union have been complaining about coffee export prices, arguing that they cannot even cover their production costs.¹²⁰ Many of those surviving coffee growers are also old and exhausted, and while paying for the retirement of others, they might never have access to a pension of their own.¹²¹

The spread of HY dwarf coffee monoculture had not only left no room for alternative commercial crops, but also demanded more agrochemicals, including those to prevent diseases. The agrochemicals have been mostly imported, and their price for the farmer is highly dependent on the currency market's behaviour. Therefore, the currency devaluation of the early 1990s, also known as the exchange rate crisis and which was triggered by some of the neoliberal reforms, had a negative economic impact on coffee growers by increasing the investment required by further harvests.¹²² Therefore, although

¹¹⁹ Luis Fernando Ramírez et al., "Informe final de la comisión de ajuste de la institucionalidad cafetera" (Bogotá, Colombia: Comité Nacional de Cafeteros, 2002); FEDECAFÉ, "LVI congreso nacional de cafeteros: informe del gerente general," General Management Report (Bogotá, Colombia: Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1997), Agrosavia, repository.agrosavia.co; Rodríguez Vargas, "Las organizaciones del sector cafetero colombiano."

¹²⁰ "Saludamos la fundación de la Unión Cafetera," *Tribuna Roja*, March 1986, 51 edition; Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos generales del café*.

¹²¹ Fieldwork observation.

¹²² Antonio José Gutiérrez Blanco, "Crisis Cafetera," *La Crónica Del Quindío*, July 12, 2015, cronicadelquindio.com.

the crisis was essentially economic, it also facilitated the rust becoming an epidemic between 2008 and 2013, according to a study by Avelino et al.¹²³

In 2011 a series of rust crises erupted across Latin American coffee lands. It is known as the 'Big Rust', and it started in Colombia. In a similar tone to the 'peasant blaming' in the case of the *Montemariano* avocados' disease critiqued in the previous section, the research network of the Regional Cooperative Program for the Technological Development and Modernization of Coffee (PROMECAFE) and IICA considered the Big Rust a symptom of "abandonment", "neglected and aging coffee plantations" with "inadequate management and susceptible varieties".¹²⁴ This was a partial explanation which ignores deep causes of the crisis, according to McCook. Drawing on Avelino et al., the environmental historian emphasises that the 2011 Big Rust was rooted in the post-Cold War global coffee politics and economics.¹²⁵ This is a conclusion shared extensively among the coffee growers, but that only very recently has found support in interdisciplinary studies.

In addition to the socio-economic and phytosanitary crises erupting in the Coffee Axis since 1989, dependency-related food insecurity spread across the entire sub-region, enlarging the list of peasant coffee growers' misfortunes:

The Caturro no longer needed the shadow, [trees] that gave all kinds of fruits in the plot, oranges, tangerines, grapefruits and a large amount of *guamas*. The *guamo* was an excellent shadow tree. When the shade [shaded coffee] disappeared, the conditions for the *pancoger* crops disappeared [too]... the sowing fields became rows of Caturro coffee where you no longer saw any different bushes or planted any fruit trees, neither maize nor beans... But the fact is that the coffee was good for everything, even to buy those same products ... With the consumerist society [people] started to have an appetite for other products and things that were produced in the countryside were no longer profitable. Peasant[s] then got their food from the village, because there was enough [money] to buy in the village, and began to despise the plantain... Today the picture is completely different. Plantains are expensive and are no longer local but come from outside... Today you

¹²³ Jacques Avelino et al., "The Coffee Rust Crises in Colombia and Central America (2008–2013): Impacts, Plausible Causes and Proposed Solutions," *Food Security* 7, no. 2 (April 2015): 303–21.

¹²⁴ PROMECAFE, "Plan de Acción Con Medidas Inmediatas" (Guatemala: Programa Cooperativo Regional para el Desarrollo Tecnológico y Modernización de la Caficultura (PROMECAFE), March 2013), 2.

¹²⁵ McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever*.

ask a Quindío child what a *guamo* is, and they do not know the *guama* anymore!”¹²⁶

The best place to evidence the decline in the food security of the Coffee Axis is in farmers' markets: *las galerías*. Coffee towns and even the big cities – Pereira, Manizales, Armenia – used to supply their *galerías* with local grains and agricultural products. These cultural centres had the best regional cuisine restaurants; old jeep cars gathered there, providing transport to the *veredas* (countryside peasant settlements), and occasional workers met farm managers there to be employed during the harvests.¹²⁷ With the disappearance of local, seasonal and diverse agriculture, some *galerías* disappeared, becoming small crime centres no longer frequented by customers. The soils of this sub-region which were highly fertile due to its proximity to the *Parque de los Nevados* volcano belt, were filled with coffee rather than also being used to grow food. Therefore, local communities' food security started to depend entirely on the supply of supermarket chains from the capital or other cities, and the traditional *galerías* decayed.

In sum, the coffee Green Revolution is the most salient example of both the benefits and all the negative ramifications of the monocrop technification at economic, social and environmental levels. Some coffee growers believed that they had been cursed for allowing the massive deforestation of the *guamo* trees. This myth, the 'curse of the *guamo*', which they attributed to the 'star-sore' fungus, was recorded by a 2008 study conducted in Risaralda.¹²⁸ According to peasants, the fungus was contained in the soil prior to deforestation, but when the trees were felled it was released, preventing new seedlings from growing.

In the Coffee Axis, the Green Revolution involved the complete replacement of shaded coffee agroforestries by sun-grown varieties, a great deforestation of the sub-region that emerged mainly in the 1980s. The ideas behind this ecological wrongdoing, as in other Green Revolutions, included a search for higher yields to maximise the benefits of the ICA. This changed local

¹²⁶ *Memories of Participant No.35.*

¹²⁷ López López, *Memorias de las galerías.*

¹²⁸ Williams Gilbeiro Jiménez García and Sebastián Ramírez Arias, "Mitos en las prácticas productivas: estrategias colectivas para la recuperación de patrimonio cultural inmaterial con pobladores rurales de la cuenca del río de la Vieja" (Pereira, Colombia, Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira, 2008).

food security in two ways: worsening it by creating dependency, and improving it by temporarily increasing the coffee growers' income. Eventually, this brought unpleasant consequences for both peasants and the landscape, undermining food sovereignty. It deforested large areas, causing soil and water depletion and biodiversity decline, as well as releasing carbon into the atmosphere. It also promoted the large monocultural production of plants coming from a narrow genetic pool and planted with maximum density, increasing the vulnerability of crops to pathogens. In particular, the coffee rust and borer beetle attacked Colombian coffee crops in the 1980s, a negative impact that was later compounded by the break up of the ICA and the subsequent price crisis. These multiple crises culminated in the Big Rust in 2011. As a consequence, some peasants left their farms and went into the cities of the Coffee Axis; others switched to dairy, and others yet have been left struggling for survival ever since, still waiting for a bonanza promise that may never be fulfilled again.

The Invisible Frontier Hitchhikers: Potato Worms

For a few Colombian regions, the transition towards dwarf coffee varieties was not possible due to climatic conditions. Southwest Santurbán, in the Santander department, was one such region. In the foothills of the *páramo* complex, in Tona, coffee crops remained shaded, and they still produce high quality crops today. Tona is the agrarian municipality of the Santanderean part of Santurbán, and is a very small town, formed merely by the square and a single street and embedded between mountains. This means that almost all its inhabitants are rural peasants. Within the municipality, the lower area grows mostly coffee; the upper area towards Guamal *vereda* is predominantly dairy farms, and various attempts to reforest have decorated the roads with thirsty, foreign eucalyptus.¹²⁹

Tona also contains one of the highest altitude peasant settlements in Colombia: the *páramo* village Berlín, which focuses on *junca* onion production and potatoes as secondary crop. Berlín is the highest plateau in Colombia at 3310 meters above sea level, holding perhaps the highest crops cultivated in the country, where temperatures can descend to -7 Celsius.¹³⁰ This small

¹²⁹ Fieldwork observation.

¹³⁰ David Rivera Ospina et al., eds., *Altiplanos de Colombia* (Cali, Colombia: Banco de Occidente Credencial, 2004); Dayanna Marcela Verjel Verjel Carrascal, "Así es vivir a -7°C en el páramo de Berlín, Santander," *www.vanguardia.com*, February 11, 2020, sec. Región,

village of Tona grew as a consequence of agrarian frontier expansion upwards, and following the main road which connects the cities of Bucaramanga and Pamplona. Being so close to the *páramo* ecosystem, conventional crops installed there have been causing ecological degradation – the disappearance of entire areas of *páramo* flora. The scientific community have called this an anthropic intervention, to imply that this environmental damage has been caused by the peasantry being displaced to these highlands.¹³¹ Berlín, however, was merely a moorland gateway connecting the Soto Norte province with Pamplona province in Northern Santander; both provinces were once celebrated wheat providers, but were forced into adopting potato crops by the American wheat imports in the 1960-70s.¹³²

The Green Revolution's arrival in the region was heralded by the introduction of new potato seeds and inorganic agrochemicals, by either the potato growers guild FEDEPAPA, based in the department of Boyacá, or by the peasants themselves from Venezuela or Boyacá. Its result was to endanger the survival of unique plant species and the main *páramo* ecosystem services – especially water.¹³³

Potatoes are native tubers in the Andean highlands, not only part of the food base of human groups but also of many insects. Before the Green Revolution, therefore, potato growers rotated their crops and also had to deal with a small percentage of acceptable loss due to the soil diversity. Since sorghum and wheat were also main products of the region in the 1960s, a single potato harvest per year was enough to provide a diversified source of income and served as subsistence crop as well. With the increased preference

Vanguardia, <https://www.vanguardia.com/santander/region/asi-es-vivir-a-7c-en-el-paramo-de-Berlin-santander-AX1990938>; Karen Brigitte Vásquez, "Las dinámicas de las actividades de producción y consumo en el sector rural: reflexiones a partir del caso del centro poblado (CP) del corregimiento de Berlín, Santander," *Revista M* 11, no. 2 (July 1, 2014): 46.

¹³¹ Examples of the literature where the 'anthropic' character of human activities is supported are: Ernesto Guhl Nimitz, *Los páramos circundantes de la Sabana de Bogotá*, Edición conmemorativa, 2a. ed, Colección Pérez Arbeláez, No. 5 (Bogotá: Jardín Botánico José Celestino Mutis, 2015); Laura Calderón, "Conflictos asociados al uso del suelo: una aproximación al área de conservación óptima en el páramo de Santurbán," *AgEcon Search*, CEDE Working or Discussion Paper, 2014, 1–48; Carlos Sarmiento et al., "Páramos habitados: desafíos para la gobernanza ambiental de la alta montaña en Colombia," *Biodiversidad en la Práctica* 2, no. 1 (December 13, 2017): 122–45; Morales Rivas et al., *Atlas de páramos de Colombia*.

¹³² For a map and reference of these places see Chapter 1, figure 8.

¹³³ Fedepapa and Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial, *Guía Ambiental Para El Cultivo de La Papa* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial, 2004).

for imported wheat in the mills discouraging local production, peasants needed new ways to get more yield and profits from these previously secondary or marginal products. Thus, the potato Green Revolution was timely for peasantries in the *páramo* and its surrounding areas. It introduced improved seeds which were harvested twice a year, as well as pesticides which killed natural competitors and eliminated the need for crop rotation.¹³⁴

New seeds were, however, not bred in Santurbán. The potato varieties in the Soto Norte and Pamplona provinces within the Santurbán moorland were brought in both formally and informally by peasants who were left reliant on this crop when local wheat started to be rejected. Formally, by 1980, the *Caja Agraria* (Agrarian Bank) was the registered supplier of seed potatoes, and their credits were linked to the use of certified varieties.¹³⁵ However, the seed potato usually originated – and in many farms still does – in the traditional selection of the best individuals among the previous harvest. Therefore, Santurbán potato growers have not been, in general, regular seed buyers. Informal transport of seed species from different regions was not uncommon. However, this has been a highly problematic practice.

In general, among Andean *páramos* the risk of non-adaptation is low, but transporting seed hinders phyto-sanitary surveillance tasks. This, in turn, facilitates small pathogens to travel as 'hitchhikers', to use Carson's expression.¹³⁶ As mentioned earlier, some scholars call them 'invasive species'.¹³⁷ In the case of the White and Guatemalan potato worms that 'appeared' in the Santurbán potato crops, however, there seems to be a consensus among peasants that this 'pest' was the responsibility of human

¹³⁴ A brief summary of the impact of the Green Revolution in the potato crops close to *páramos* is made by Fedepapa and the Ministry of Environment for the 2004 report '*Guía ambiental para el cultivo de la papa*': Fedepapa and Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial.

¹³⁵ On origins of the earlier varieties of improved potato seeds and their connection to the *Caja Agraria* and FEDEPAPA see: L. Luján Claire, *Intentos de producción de semilla de papa en Colombia*. (Colombia: Nueva Agricultura Tropical - Corporación Colombiana de Investigación Agropecuaria, 1980); Juan Manuel González, "Una aproximación al estudio de la transformación ecológica del paisaje rural colombiano: 1850-1990," in *Naturaleza en disputa: ensayos de historia ambiental de Colombia, 1850-1995*, ed. Germán Palacio, 1. ed, Historia y Ambiente (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Facultad de Derecho, Ciencias Políticas y Sociales: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2001).

¹³⁶ Carson, *Silent Spring*.

¹³⁷ Some new and old titles that exemplify the invaders/aliens language: Eatherley, *Invasive Aliens*; Hedgpeth, "Foreign Invaders"; Livingston, Osteen, and Roberts, "Regulating Agricultural Imports to Keep out Foreign Pests and Disease"; Feal, "Leptospirosis in England Due to Foreign Species"; Stevenson, *Foreign Plant Diseases*.

hands, their own hands. This was an unanticipated consequence of the Green Revolution, not only because of the seed changes stimulated, but also because of the ambition and individualistic mentality incited in the *paramuno* peasants. Peasants acquired new seed potatoes outside Santurbán to try them in their lands, being pushed by the need for survival, imposed by unjust agrarian policies which caused their wheat bankruptcy. The main origins of these informally imported seed potatoes, according to the testimonies recalled by this research, were the department of Boyacá in the Southwest, or Venezuela in the Northeast.¹³⁸

During the two field trips made to Santurbán in 2018 and 2019 for this research project, a wave of Venezuelan immigrants walking into Colombia in precarious conditions was observed. They were seen crossing the moor in groups through extreme low temperatures, either entire families walking or just men, crowded in their hundreds in trucks that usually transported potatoes. It was hard for this researcher to envision how, during the 1970s' oil boom, the migratory flow was going in the opposite direction, albeit less frequently and less precariously, according to interviewed peasants who made this journey. Many Colombians, especially from the *Santanderes* (Santander and Northern Santander) and the Caribbean, including some from Los Montes de María, embarked on the adventure of migrating to seek temporary jobs that would allow them to earn in Bolívars – a robust currency then – to invest in their lands in Colombia. Some stayed behind, hoping to improve their household conditions including food security. However, for the present investigation, it is more relevant to focus on the peasant men and women who took advantage of this open border's permeability to bring in agro-technology and foreign currency on a regular basis, whilst remaining resident in Colombia, safeguarding their connection to their lands.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Interviews where potato seeds brought from Venezuela were mentioned: *Memories of Participant No.83*; *Memories of Participant No.87*; *Memories of Participant No.88 Anonymous (Interview 62)*, Santurbán, Recording (Tona, Santander, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.95 Anonymous (Interview 69)*, Santurbán, Recording (Chitagá, Norte de Santander, Colombia, 2019).

¹³⁹ From 1950 until 2015 approximately 2,9 million Colombians migrated and settled in Venezuela. In the agricultural state Táchira in the frontier, almost half of the population is Colombian of first or second generation. See: Giuseppe De Corso, "The Politics of Movement between Venezuela and Colombia. Myths, Realities and Conflicts.," preprint (SocArXiv, February 18, 2020).

The impact that the proximity to Venezuela has had on the development of the Santurbán region is perhaps greater than might be suspected, and it is a subject that has not been fully recognised or studied. Many frontier stories, as found in local archives, originate from Northern Santander. The Academy of History of Northern Santander's journal '*Gaceta Histórica*', throughout its years of existence since 1934, has actively used the bi-national border discourse; however, it has failed to consider the moorland within its authors' scholarship. This omission, not only by historians but also society in general, allowed human interventions into the *páramo*.¹⁴⁰ The obscurity which immersed Northern Santurbán and Berlín before the moorland regulations, combined with the open border permissiveness, seemed to be socio-economically beneficial to those peasants. They enjoyed freedom and flexibility to cross the Colombia-Venezuela border many times, while investing in land and agricultural production to become prosperous small farmers within a rather inhospitable and difficult setting. The frontier exchange was life-changing not just for Santurbán but many other regions in Colombia, including the Caribbean Coast and Los Montes de María therein. One of the peasants displaced from Nomeembromes – the flooded parish – who was interviewed for this study ended up working in Venezuela after being declared bankrupt, in order to keep his house in María La Baja, his cooperative obligations, his credit debts, and the irrigated rice farm INCORA assigned to him. In view of bank rejections, creditors, and either lack of land or the risk of losing acquired land, Venezuela represented a last opportunity for many Colombian peasants.¹⁴¹

Santurbán peasant agriculture developed and survived after the wheat production ruin, thanks to the Venezuelan-Colombian bilateral frontier. It provided extraordinary financial muscle and created resilience over the decades after the counter-reform. Furthermore, savings in Bolívares and better work positions facilitated an agrarian reform in some *paramuno* areas, where peasants were able to buy from the landlords the same lands they used to work:

My brother travelled to Venezuela a lot. He planted the potatoes, which at that time had no worms... He used to work in Venezuela then, because the Venezuelan currency was worth a lot in relation to

¹⁴⁰ Álvaro Villamizar Suárez, "Integración fronteriza versus apertura internacional," *Gaceta Histórica de Norte de Santander* 129–130 (June 17, 2004): 35–45.

¹⁴¹ *Memories of Participant No.68; Memories of Participant No.91.*

Colombian pesos. And he returned when the potato was ready to harvest... I went to Venezuela at nineteen... and I became pregnant with a son in the belly to live on a farm... they [my siblings] were already owners and they were in debt with the *Caja [Agraria]* and I even helped them because I started to earn good money... The farm was my sister's [originally], who had gone to Venezuela and had saved... When I was nine or ten years old, the land belonged to landlords... [but] people began to save, some went to Venezuela and they no longer worked for the landowner, so the landowner had a lot of land, but no workers. So, he started selling bits, ten, twenty, thirty hectares; and those who were sharecroppers of these landowners began to own those same lands"¹⁴²

The so-called 'border integration' sought by both countries since the 1960s gave a window of opportunity for peasants, particularly rural women, to find autonomy to exercise their peasant vocation without the pressure of existing patriarchal structures. Open-border legislation efforts aimed to formalise a de facto exchange situation, starting with the Treaty of Tonchalá in 1959, granting temporary permits for bilateral agricultural workers.¹⁴³ However, recommendations made by the Currie Plan in the 1960s and the Inter-American Development Bank in the 1970s that proposed binational development based on a 'lead sector model' such as agribusiness never materialised; and although over the following decades several treaties and trade agreements were signed, they proved ineffective.¹⁴⁴ On the contrary, the 1989 neoliberal turn precipitated a revolution which by the end of the 1990s advanced the Chávez regime, which in turn, created political tensions.¹⁴⁵ As a result, conflicting political interests of both countries' elites have inhibited regulation of an important exchange for frontier communities, who – regardless the decisions at the diplomatic level – keep moving goods and people at their convenience, in as organic and informal a way as necessary.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² *Memories of Participant No.91*.

¹⁴³ Villamizar Suárez, "Integración fronteriza versus apertura internacional"; Carolina López Granados, *Zona de integración fronteriza entre Colombia y Venezuela*. (Editorial Acad Mica Espa, 2012).

¹⁴⁴ Lauchlin Currie, "The 'Leading Sector' Model of Growth in Developing Countries," *Journal of Economic Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1974): 1–16; Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion: An Economic History of Latin America in the 20th Century* (Washington, D.C. : Baltimore, MD: Inter-American Development Bank ; Distributed by The Johns Hopkins University Press for the Inter-American Development Bank and the European Union, 1998).

¹⁴⁵ James F Rochlin, "Who Said the Cold War Is Over? The Political Economy of Strategic Conflict between Venezuela and Colombia," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (March 2011): 237–60.

¹⁴⁶ Villamizar Suárez, "Integración fronteriza versus apertura internacional"; López Granados, *Zona de integración fronteriza entre Colombia y Venezuela*.

The *paramuno* peasants, then, enjoyed good cash flow and, following the advice of providers or FEDEPAPA agricultural specialists, renewed their potato plants and increased pesticide application. In order to do this, they imported seeds from other parts of the Northeastern Andean moors never anticipating any negative consequence of their travels. Nevertheless, with the flow of peasants, there came the flow of seeds and pests that had a dreadful impact on their landscape and their lives in the mid- to long-term. It is very important to mention that although peasant testimonies gathered for this study suggest that new seeds and technologies were brought from Venezuela and Boyacá, there is no firm evidence that proves that these ‘hitchhikers’ arrived from Venezuela. This theory is based on observations made by peasants from their own experience, but it is also supported by several studies which confirm that seed transport is one of the most common causes of plant diseases’ spreading.¹⁴⁷ In all fairness, these nematodes could also hitchhike freely and informally with the peasants, in both directions; and most certainly they did. The acquisition of new potato varieties that could work in *paramuno* environments was most likely limited to the exchange between the three neighbouring countries holding *páramo* ecosystems and sharing relatively open borders: Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. This is especially applicable to the ‘potato corridor’, to use Romero and Monasterio’s words to describe the potato region formed by departments of Boyacá, Santander, Northern Santander and Mérida (Venezuela).¹⁴⁸

The white worm (*Premnotrypes vorax*) and Guatemalan potato tuber moth (*Tecia solanivora*) have been the species that peasants recall as the most detrimental to land and their livelihoods. These insect populations which overwhelmed Santurbán were common pests originating probably in Central America or in the potato corridor.¹⁴⁹ The potato corridor has acted as a ‘genetic

¹⁴⁷ Donald E. Aylor et al., “Quantifying the Rate of Release and Escape of ‘Phytophthora Infestans’ Sporangia from a Potato Canopy,” *Phytopathology* 91, no. 12 (December 2001): 1189–96; Ingrid M. Parker and Gregory S. Gilbert, “The Evolutionary Ecology of Novel Plant-Pathogen Interactions,” *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics* 35, no. 1 (December 15, 2004): 675–700; K F Baker and S H Smith, “Dynamics of Seed Transmission of Plant Pathogens,” *Annual Review of Phytopathology* 4, no. 1 (September 1966): 311–32.

¹⁴⁸ Liccia Romero and Maximina Monasterio, “Papas negras, papas de páramo: un pasivo socioambiental de la modernización agrícola en Los Andes de Venezuela. ¿Es posible recuperarlas?,” *Boletín Antropológico* 23, no. 64 (May 2005): 107–38.

¹⁴⁹ CABI, “*Tecia Solanivora*. [Distribution Map].,” *Distribution Maps of Plant Pests*, no. December (August 1, 2001); CABI, “*Premnotrypes Vorax*. [Distribution Map].,” *Distribution Maps of Plant Pests*, no. December (August 1, 2001).

bottleneck' where the Guatemalan caterpillar grew homogeneously in a well-established niche.¹⁵⁰

The arrival and intensification of insect infestations in potato crops, and the transition to unsustainable and risky agricultural and seed transport practices such as the informal introduction of new potato varieties, are examples of how the American wheat-dumping followed by the Green Revolution impacted peasant agroecosystems in the Northeastern Andes. There was a connection between the new HY potato seeds acquired to replace the wheat income, and the introduction and increasing application of agro-toxic compounds to the *paramuno* soils. According to collected peasant testimonies, before these processes, the crops near the moor were organic – that is, no inorganic or synthetic chemical inputs were used:

“when the wheat was finished, the corn sowing was left... the Col-ICA potato was the first one that arrived here, because this lower part was not a potato area but a cereal area. The potato crops were towards the *páramo* where they used to sow the Argentine potato, another potato that was called *Tocana*, another *Panazul* of the moors... No fungicide or herbicide was used, neither for potatoes, nor for wheat, nor for corn, nor for beans, the food produced was completely healthy... it was totally natural, no fertilisers either, no chemicals, only what was organic, where there were animals, there were manure deposits for spreading, it was totally natural.”¹⁵¹

Before the wheat dumping, the highest zones near the moorland were preferred for potato crops, traditional varieties known by their vernacular names. The last of the large mills, Herrán in Pamplona, was closed around 1989, so this crop replacement process starting in the 1960s with the first wheat imports most likely culminated during the 1980s. The new seed potatoes were locally developed and promoted by Col-ICA, FEDEPAPA and the *Caja Agraria*. They primarily reached the lower plots and allowed former wheat growers to survive by switching from wheat to potato crops.¹⁵² Other testimonies allude to the competitive advantage of the new varieties – with not one but two or more

¹⁵⁰ The Guatemalan moths became successfully invasive but genetically more homogeneous individuals than their ancestors in Central America. See: N. Puillandre et al., “Genetic Bottleneck in Invasive Species: The Potato Tuber Moth Adds to the List,” *Biological Invasions* 10, no. 3 (March 2008): 319–33.

¹⁵¹ *Memories of Participant No.76*.

¹⁵² On the development of improved varieties of potato seed, see: Luján Claire, *Intentos de producción de semilla de papa en Colombia*.

harvests per year there would be no more *canícula*, the 'hunger months'.¹⁵³ The resulting soil exhaustion, the crop densification and the reduction of its genetic base, as mentioned, made the monoculture more vulnerable to pathogens, needing more pesticides to control them. From the peasants' perspective, these are referred to as 'poisons'. In the same way, they talk about their practices prior to the Green Revolution in terms of 'healthy' and 'natural'.¹⁵⁴ Their attitude towards the *páramo* as observed indicates that they meant health for both humans and Nature.

According to various studies conducted by IGAC and the Humboldt Institute, peasants' cultivation practices grew closer to *páramo* ecosystems in Santurbán for two main reasons. Firstly, as a consequence of colonial mining in the highlands to feed workers, since the sixteenth century; and secondly, growing towards upper altitudes to take advantage of the lower temperatures as natural barriers for pathogens.¹⁵⁵ This has had a high impact on the environment and the local food security: it has limited the subsistence crops to those able to survive the extreme weather.

The Colombian *páramos* are known for receiving peasants displaced by conflict-related violence; however, the Santurbán *paramo* was an exception. Not only were these highlands inhabited by pre-Columbian indigenous communities, but since Spanish times they have encompassed various colonial foundational towns and parishes inhabited by *criollos*, *mestizos* and 'indios'. Therefore, the agrarian frontier here has been highly dynamic. The *paramuno* peasants, although not part of indigenous groups, are descended from indigenous groups and speak of the *páramo* and its lagoons as sacred. They have placed strong emphasis on using indigenous farming practices domestically, but been forced to adopt conventional Green Revolution agriculture for commercial crop plots. This indicates a level of preservation of their radical relationality with their environment. However, in the case of potato crops they have lost most of the

¹⁵³ *Memories of Participant No.76; Memories of Participant No.91.*

¹⁵⁴ *Memories of Participant No.83; Memories of Participant No.84; Memories of Participant No.91; Memories of Participant No.95.*

¹⁵⁵ Marian Cabrera, Wilson Ramírez, and Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, eds., *Restauración ecológica de los páramos de Colombia: transformación y herramientas para su conservación*, Primera edición (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible, Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2014); Vásquez, "Las dinámicas de las actividades de producción y consumo en el sector rural"; Fedepapa and Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial, *Guía Ambiental Para El Cultivo de La Papa.*

required know-how to practice traditional peasant agriculture in the Andean highlands, and very few have saved native or creole seeds. Their expressions of regret at this lost heritage are similar to those expressed by the coffee growers. They also perceive that the soil has lost properties; in their words, "land has become used to" fertilisers and herbicides:

The soil needs the chemical because it is already trained. It got used to it. Just like when you get used to a medicine and if you do not take it, you get sick... The day we do not take the pill, that day we have high blood pressure. So it is the soil now.¹⁵⁶

Despite the cold helping to keep healthy plots in higher lands, production is not cleaner. This researcher's observations made during fieldwork suggest that in Berlín large amounts of what peasants call 'poison' are still applied to the onion crops, right at the gates of the moorland. And, even if it was cleaner, the food production at those high altitudes is problematic. Pushing the agrarian frontier has driven serious environmental impacts in itself, since areas of endemic vegetation and biodiversity were felled and burned to create open pastures. Although a discussion on agroecological transition to reverse the impact of the Green Revolution in the *páramos* has been opened in the last two decades, in areas like Berlín agroecological initiatives have had no support and have faded.¹⁵⁷

Food sovereignty in these highlands has also been restricted. In the higher areas of the *páramo*, agro-diversity conditions are difficult to achieve due to the weather conditions. This made balanced nutrition in combination with self-sufficiency intrinsically difficult and worse as the agrarian frontier was pushed higher. The *paramuno* diet, consequently, has adapted to the limited products that the Andean moorland provides: potatoes, coriander, onions and milk, plus lamb or trout as protein.¹⁵⁸ Life for these communities unfolds in tension between loving the *páramo* and caring for it as sacred, but at the same utilising unsustainable agricultural practices and facing challenges of limited

¹⁵⁶ *Memories of Participants No. 78, 79 (Collective Interview).*

¹⁵⁷ *Memories of Participant No.89 Anonymous (Interview 63), Santurbán, Recording (Tona, Santander, Colombia, 2019).*

¹⁵⁸ Fieldwork observation.

food diversity, marketing their products and controlling the potato worms and caterpillars to survive.

Conclusion

The 'green poisons' have been used in this chapter to evidence the environmental impact of local Green Revolutions in the peasant landscapes of the three sites studied. It has been an expression used to analyse wider processes of ecological degradation, originating from the developmentalist and neo-colonial idea that peasant agriculture was unproductive and required the intervention of scientific 'missionaries' to obtain higher yields and maximise profits. The peasant perspectives obtained from fieldwork interviews show regret and discontent, and contrast with versions of developmentalist success of monocultures. Despite adopting these technologies to maintain their farm and even, in some cases, improve their quality of life, peasants have provided a highly critical account of unease and repentance about this transition by using terms such as 'demanding seeds', 'poisoning', 'exhaustion' of the soil and appearance of 'pests'. By doing so, the peasants interviewed demonstrated that they keep a strong bond with the land and Nature and desire to care better for it. These dialogues emphasise a narrative aiming to show that they currently struggle towards adapting to a more sustainable, diverse and ecological agriculture involving heirloom seeds, and the rejection and reversal of the Green Revolution, even though some of those technologies are still in use. This narrative is, naturally, a key component of food sovereignty and peasant rights frameworks.

This thesis has presented a chronological parallel between peasantries in three highly different sub-regions of Colombia, going through some counter-reformist effects of the 1960s American Aid and Alliance for Progress, the 1970s *terrateniente* coalition counter-reform and the spread of the Green Revolution in the 1980s. Among these counter-reforms, the Green Revolution is perhaps the most homogeneous process, being almost transversal to the three sub-regions of study, not in terms of a simultaneous timing but in common factors of adoption and similar impacts. Even though I have presented them as multiple local Green Revolutions centred around rice, coffee or potatoes, they presented the same patterns. Drawing on ideas, research and trained personnel

contributed by international agro-scientists funded by powerful groups such as the Rockefeller foundation, these Green Revolutions were led by local agrarian elites such as FEDEARROZ, FEDECAFÉ and FEDEPAPA, which profited from higher yields. These processes caused environmental damage where they were implemented, depeasantised peasantries and created food dependency and vulnerability. Additionally, they facilitated the advance of diseases and pathogens that threatened the same crops or others surrounding them, as well as nearby ecosystems.

In the megadiverse context of Colombian sub-regions, the Green Revolution posed at least four threats to biodiversity. Two of them relate to Nature not being properly protected by peasants. First, the loss of birds and tropical animals whose metabolism contributed to the renovation of edible plants such as the avocado trees.¹⁵⁹ Second, nearby unique and fragile ecosystems such as the *páramo* were affected by depletion of soils and waters and the pressure of monocrops to their frontiers. Two threats to agrodiversity and Nature as managed by peasants, were also perceived. Firstly, the loss of genetic native/*criollo* lines and varieties, a richness that has been driven to extinction or close to it. Secondly, the establishment of large monocultures with genetic homogeneity, such as those created with the dwarf sun-grown coffee or the 'improved' potato seed, facilitated the advance of pathogens such as the leaf rust and the coffee beetle, or the white and Guatemalan worms who spread throughout the potato corridor. Therefore, the Green Revolution increased threats not only to the environment but also to the food security it claimed to grant.

This chapter has argued that the ideas behind the Green Revolution are neo-colonial. They represented an effort that extended from the US, international organisations, and powerful philanthropic funds into Colombia, conducted initially by seed breeders who saw themselves as 'missionaries' in places of 'war', fighting the battle against hunger. These international 'experts' not only advanced seeds of HYC but they also planted metaphorical seeds of developmentalism, yield increments, profitability standards, and Western ways to administer the farm addressed to men. For a rural woman, the

¹⁵⁹ Which in other places is the case for pollinators and other species whose population has been reduced by accumulation of toxic compounds used in industrialised agriculture.

developmentalist lessons included themes relating to how to behave and how to manage the household economy, as mentioned in Chapter 3. In the name of international cooperation, the genetic material coming from such countries as Mexico, Colombia and India was shared by the scientists among research centres worldwide, and was later used to develop limited access seeds or kept in genetic banks.¹⁶⁰ They established the basis to open the local market not only to certified seeds, but also to toxic compounds in some fertilisers and pesticides which were introduced into local agriculture systems as indispensable facilitators of efficient monoculture. I also argued that these training and ideological ‘seeds’ were harvested by Colombian agrarian elites grouped into Federations in Colombia, to lead their own local Green Revolutions. Therefore, these processes were yet another manifestation of patriarchal colonial legacies, of internal colonialism.

A second key argument emerges from this realisation and the governmental discourses and new policies emanating from the Chicoral Pact: that the Green Revolutions were associated with the *terratiente* coalition counter-reform. In other words, the spread of the Green Revolution, and its seeds which were planted since the 1950-60s by American missionaries, was one of the practical effects of the Chicoral Pact. This was a national policy, and hence presented similar patterns across the three sub-regions. It was an agrarian policy which aimed to – and partially managed to – detach farming from what the government considered the biggest problem in the countryside: peasant agriculture. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that depeasantisation through Green Revolution technification was enforced as a policy.

The Green Revolution acted as a counter-reform with negative impacts not only on food security and food sovereignty, but also caused environmental depletion, and depeasantisation. In other words, it resulted in depeasantisation of both peasants and the territories. This chapter explored both the motivations and effects of agro-technological transfers and evidenced the specific ways in which this damaged food sovereignty and the ecological balance of

¹⁶⁰ Helen Anne Curry, “Gene Banks, Seed Libraries, and Vegetable Sanctuaries: The Cultivation and Conservation of Heritage Vegetables in Britain, 1970–1985,” *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 41, no. 2 (December 2019): 87–96; Curry, “Breeding Uniformity and Banking Diversity.”

agroecosystems. These transfers contributed to this damage through effects such as deforestation, erosion, toxic accumulation, pathogen advances, endangerment of endemic ecosystems, biodiversity and agrodiversity lost and food dependency. Because this revolution was not only technological but also ideological, it shaped a paradigm shift in the rural ethos, one that transformed peasant territories into capitalist farming landscapes and broke the relationships between peoples and territories.

The vulnerability created by the 1980s depeasantisation occurred in these sub-regions through the Green Revolution's advance, and evidences how sustainable peasant food security requires food sovereignty. This happens because food systems based merely on food security, such as HY monocultures, aim to promote purchasing power as the desirable food access tool and to produce at massive scale to cheapen staples, creating long logistics chains outsourcing costs in the form of external impacts endured by society and environment. Food systems based on food sovereignty, on the other hand, aim to provide culturally acceptable food with social and environmental justice and rights for consumers, producers and Nature. In other words, they privilege agrodiversity rather than monoculture, organic inputs rather than inorganic, highly intensive labour instead of industrialisation, and peasantisation instead of capitalisation of the countryside. Food systems based on food sovereignty, therefore, oppose Green Revolution principles.

In this vulnerable and dependent context, these peasantries approached the 1990s and the end of the American food aid regime. With the Washington Consensus and the neoliberal turn, the advent of the corporate food regime was characterised also for the exacerbation of problems such as climate change, open market pressures and armed rural violence. These conjoined problems posed the ultimate combination of challenges to these communities' survival, pushing them to organise various defence strategies. The oppression and extensive reduction of state support also raised distress and anger culminating in the 2013 Great Agrarian Strike, as will be reviewed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5. 'Peasantries of *El Dorado*'

Multiple Stressors on Food Sovereignty and Depeasantisation in the Neoliberal Era

Peasants did it... that was their vocation, just as we in Tona were farmers, there, their farm vocation was looking for gold ... they were rooted in the land, as peasants, but living from the mines... artisan small mining, they made their holes... then the multinational appeared and the issue of migration began, the issue of the land sales began.¹

Elías Calderón

After three decades of counter-reforms associated with American aid and the Green Revolution, the next stage in the processes of de-agrarianisation and depeasantisation started with the 1990s neoliberal reforms in Colombia, which contributed to different forms of violence, both structural and direct. As Calderón suggests, some Colombian peasant cultures who were vulnerable after previous counter-reforms had been still developing diverse activities to survive, including small gold mining in a highly artisan manner and the small-scale food production. In the 1990s the neoliberal turn and the change of global corporate food regime were simultaneous.² During their timeframe, powerful corporations captured the food chain worldwide, whilst nationally, arable land was reassigned and food insecurity increased with dependency of imports. In the sub-regions of study, corporate advances on Natural resource accumulation, such as land grabbing or 'water grabbing', were facilitated directly by depeasantisation strategies. The 1990s opening to the global market attracted large-scale national and international investments in Colombia which altered forever the peasants' living conditions. These changes involved new competitors seeking opportunities to appropriate and exploit the underlying richness in diverse peasant territories, including lands, waters, and minerals among other natural resources, which peasants used to manage as commons.

¹ *Memories of Participant No.92 Elías Calderón (Interview 66), Santurbán, Recording (Tona, Santander, Colombia, 2019).*

² For more detail see the introduction, note 105. McMichael, "Historicizing Food Sovereignty," November 2, 2014; McMichael, *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions*, 2014.

To make things worse, the 1990s market depeasantisation coincided with climate change and armed conflict pressures in these rural areas.

This chapter focuses on the impact that armed conflict, climate and environmental conflict, and unequal market pressures had on food sovereignty. The joint impacts of these ‘multiple stressors’ deepened the maldevelopment and depeasantisation of territories at larger scales than were seen during the developmentalist reforms or *terratiente* counter-reform reviewed in former chapters. This chapter is unique in comparison with previous chapters in the addition of the multiple stressors concept to the original theoretical framework of this thesis. The ‘multiple stressors’ model was developed by Feola et al in 2014 to explain the complex situation of the 1990s rural Colombia in a concise manner.³ This concept will be used in this chapter to argue that the transformations and regional conflicts associated with the combined action of multiple stressors arising in the 1990s resulted in vast detrimental impacts on food sovereignty and peasants’ rights.

The devastating effects of neoliberal reforms, a new market-based agrarian reform, open market and Free Trade Agreements (FTA) combined with multiple forms of violence, which included land grabbing and peasants’ bankruptcy across the country, have been widely documented and discussed by Borrás, Fajardo-Montaña, Machado, Rendón, and Grajales, among others with little or no acknowledgment of the new environmental injustices.⁴ Through the comparative analysis of multiple stressors’ synergies on the studied sub-regions, this thesis casts new lights on counter-reformist impacts in these

³ Giuseppe Feola et al., “Farmer Responses to Multiple Stresses in the Face of Global Change: Assessing Five Case Studies to Enhance Adaptation,” in *Proceedings of the 11th European IFSA Symposium ‘Farming Systems Facing Global Challenges: Capacities and Strategies,’* vol. 11 (Farmers responses to multiple stresses in the face of global change: Assessing five case studies to enhance adaptation, Berlin: The IFSA Europe Group (International Farming Systems Association), 2014), 1993–2000; Giuseppe Feola, Luis Alfonso Agudelo Vanegas, and Bernardita Paz Contesse Bamón, “Colombian Agriculture under Multiple Exposures: A Review and Research Agenda,” *Climate and Development* 7, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 278–92.

⁴ Saturnino M. Borrás, “Questioning Market-Led Agrarian Reform: Experiences from Brazil, Colombia and South Africa,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 3, no. 3 (July 2003): 367–94; Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*; Absalón Machado Cartagena, “La cuestión agraria frente al neoliberalismo,” in *The Neoliberal Fallacy: Criticism and Alternatives (La Falacia Neoliberal: Crítica y Alternativas)*, ed. Dario Indalecio Restrepo Botero (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Vicerrectoría Académica y Sede Bogotá, 2003), 269–86; Carlos Enrique Londoño Rendón, “La apertura económica en Colombia,” *Pensamiento Humanista* 0, no. 4 (May 18, 2010): 39–51; Jacobo Grajales, “Land Grabbing, Legal Contention and Institutional Change in Colombia,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 42, no. 3–4 (July 4, 2015): 541–60.

locales. It shows that socio-environmental conflicts were provoked and persisted, being gradually more openly related to corporations and stakeholders aggressively competing with peasantries to misappropriate their natural resources, particularly water, after the 2010 energy and mining policies.

This chapter also argues that these conflicts had the additional effect of deepening peasant marginalisation and advancing anti-peasant sentiments among civil society actors. After these changes it was not only agrarian elites or *terratenientes* who were antagonising or pressuring peasants, but also city dwellers and downstream water users.

The title 'Peasantries of *El Dorado*' evokes the legend of a golden place, which for peasantries involved in this study is more than merely a colonial myth but an actual representation of the richness of their territories. In Santurbán, for example, peasants affirm that the 'real' *El Dorado* is a gold deposit kept secret and hidden in the *páramo* by their local indigenous ancestors, who are now extinct.⁵ However, the term can have an alternative contextual meaning that highlights the prosperity drawn from the land. Under fully functioning food sovereignty systems, the Nature which constituted this *Dorado* would be environmentally managed by the peasant communities. Therefore, resources such as land, water, biodiversity and minerals such as silver and gold would be exploited at small scale with artisan techniques and preserved as common resources for present and future generations as an act of care. However, under the 1990s' open trade conditions, that richness attracted investors whose mining and energy industries caused market speculation and land dispossession as the opening quote showed. The gap between nutritional and agri-food policies widened and government policies increasingly prioritised commodity production over food production for domestic consumption. In the three sub-regions this specialisation was done precisely to satisfy the global market while the internal food needs fulfilled by peasantries were neglected. This chapter argues that consequently it was mainly market forces which drove the seizure and conversion of these peasant landscapes to host money-making activities like agrotourism, ecotourism, large-scale goldmining and biofuel cropping.

⁵ From my fieldwork notes. This was narrated by the peasant guide in my visit to the black lagoon in the high paramo of Santurbán in 2019.

This chapter starts with a section containing a contextual foreword and presenting depeasantising impacts of three main stressors – climate injustice, armed conflict and market liberalisation on the case study sub-regions. The chapter then analyses how these stressors created synergies in the field using two of the three sub-regions studied. For an in-depth analysis of synergies, I focus the sub-regions of Los Montes de María and Santurbán. In these regions, the peasant culture remaining in the 1990s was more resilient, while in the Coffee Axis the processes of depeasantisation and peasant decomposition were highly advanced by then.

Contribution of Multiple Stressors to Depeasantisation in the Sub-regions of Study in 1990-2000s

Feola et al developed their multiple stressors framework explicitly for these complexities related to the Colombian case in the neoliberal era, based on O'Brien and Leichenko's double exposure study of the damage caused by the combined effects of simultaneous climate change and globalisation.⁶ In Colombia, they found a large-scale third stressor present: armed violence. Feola et al's model serves to unveil hidden interconnections of the armed conflict with market forces and environmental injustices in the complex Colombian context showing that the multiple stressors combine, reinforce each other, and add up to worsen their effects.

Context: The End of the Age of (Almost) Innocence

The age of (almost) innocence in which voters were bought by the local boss is over, and politics is now very big money. Those with the most to hand and the

⁶ Karen L O'Brien and Robin M Leichenko, "Double Exposure: Assessing the Impacts of Climate Change within the Context of Economic Globalization," *Global Environmental Change* 10, no. 3 (October 2000): 221–32; Giuseppe Feola, Luis Alfonso Agudelo Vanegas, and Bernardita Paz Contesse Bamón, "Colombian Agriculture under Multiple Exposures: A Review and Research Agenda," *Climate and Development* 7, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 278–92; Giuseppe Feola et al., "Farmer Responses to Multiple Stresses in the Face of Global Change: Assessing Five Case Studies to Enhance Adaptation," in *Proceedings of the 11th European IFSA Symposium 'Farming Systems Facing Global Challenges: Capacities and Strategies,'* vol. 11 (Farmers responses to multiple stresses in the face of global change: Assessing five case studies to enhance adaptation, Berlin: The IFSA Europe Group (International Farming Systems Association), 2014), 1993–2000.

greatest incentive to misuse it are the Mafiosi and others who have become rich through drugs and drug-related business.⁷

J. A. Robson, 1983 (Her Majesty's Ambassador in Bogotá to the Secretary of State of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs)

The era of great public investment in agricultural development in Colombia faded in 1989. This was the year of the Washington Consensus and the end of the Cold War. The penetration of criminal cartels in public administration and national life was at its peak. It also brought the end of the coffee pact, and the start of peace negotiations with the M-19 guerrillas. There was talk in Colombia of open market and engagement with Friedman's neoliberal ideas.⁸ At this time Colombia went from being a food exporter to being an importer. Between 1962 and 1989 the value contributed by agriculture, forestry and fisheries to the GDP decreased from twenty-seven per cent to sixteen per cent, and by 2012 it fell below six per cent.⁹ As was evidenced in previous chapters, the unfinished 1960s agricultural reform, the 1970s counter-reform, and the 1980s Green Revolutions, all inspired by developmentalist ideas, brought limited benefits for some Colombian peasantries; and were all shaped by the parameters of the capitalist, modernising and developmentalist rhetoric: access to high-yield seeds, extension services, and agrarian technology. These allowed some peasants, usually sheltered by a paternal agrarian Federation, to be at least temporarily inserted in the market, the bank system, and therefore the technology transfer. These shifts, therefore, left a trail of what such scholars as Amin, Danecki et al. and Tortosa call 'maldevelopment': "harmful secondary effects of development as a programme", wrongly conceived from the stigmatisation of some economies as 'underdeveloped'.¹⁰ The maldevelopment of Colombian agriculture accounts for how ill-prepared peasantries were to navigate globalisation and the 1990s dismantling of their state support networks.

⁷ J. A. Robson, "The Betancur Government: After One Year" (August 18, 1983), T 439/341, The National Archives, Kew.

⁸ Martin Friedman, "Neoliberalism and Its Prospects," *Farmand*, February 17, 1951, 89–93.

⁹ World Bank, "World Development Indicators" (World Bank Group, 2019), <https://data.worldbank.org/country/colombia>.

¹⁰ Samīr Amīn, *Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure* (Cape Town: Pambazuka, 2011); Uniwersytet Warszawski and Jan Danecki, eds., *Insights into Maldevelopment: Reconsidering the Idea of Progress*, 2. impr (Warsaw: Elipsa, 1996); Tortosa, "Maldevelopment."

The rounds of policies, events and processes of depeasantisation associated with the counter-reforms previously reviewed also disenfranchised peasantries from land, water and other resources. As has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, in the sub-regions of study agrodiversity was reduced, soils were depleted, dependence was created, peasant autonomy was undermined and epidemics of new plant pathogens erupted. Consequently, peasantries in these sub-regions 'maldeveloped', they became highly vulnerable to multiple stressors coming in the 1990s such as price volatility, climate change, and armed violence. In Robson's words, it was "the end of the age of (almost) innocence" because, as another consequence of this vulnerability, in some peasantries, illegal crops proliferated. While in the 1980s Colombia was characterised by a powerful drug mafia dedicated to the global logistics, in the 1990s the country became an illicit crops' producer for foreign cartels.

A pivotal point of the neoliberal turn in Colombia was the proclamation of the 1991 Political Constitution which abolished the extradition of Colombians and facilitated the 'quiet' retirement of most of the mafia bosses. Among its achievements it advanced in individual liberties and incorporated multiculturalism and both indigenous and ethnic rights. However, it also served as platform for privatisation, restructuring of the state, new agrarian reform and the open market.

Impact of Open Market Reform On Peasant Food Sovereignty

In the 1990s, the economic strategy in Colombia was diverted from the developmentalist policies of Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), welfare state and social expenditure to one of inflation control, privatisation and open market, with the gradual introduction of neoliberal reforms and the Washington Consensus formulas. As perceived by peasants, trade globalisation without appropriate support meant that the government offered the internal demand to international subsidised suppliers while dismantling the agrarian infrastructure and institutions that served as unique support of local production:

The government helped foreign companies, but not the peasant, who works alone... People have lost entire harvests. Some peasants in the agrarian strike said that we do not need occasional charity, we need them to let us work, perhaps they could subsidise us to be able to continue working. Get us out of this competition against foreigners without having the resources!... The

government should stop importing peasant's products.... lots of potatoes are thrown away, lost to maintain a foreign product... Perhaps the interest of our governments is to please other countries, but not their own country.¹¹

Local production was protected until the 1990s by a mechanism of import substitution, promoted by ECLAC in the 1960s and implemented by President Lleras-Restrepo: a full internal food stock control by the Institute of Agricultural Marketing (IDEMA), import tariffs and regulated prices of imported agrarian supplies.¹² Peasant memories therefore remember this period as one of economic stability and well-being, which made them accept some downsides of the developmentalist agriculture adopted such as the environmental impact of Green Revolution.¹³ ISI social indicators support their notion.¹⁴ They were not worried about food sovereignty then, which is a concept that appeared as a response to the neoliberal agrarian market changes. The system, however, had economic offsets. Inflation grew above the two digits in the 1980s, and economic elites who chaired agrarian guilds – such as FEDEARROZ – blamed IDEMA for it.¹⁵ Neoliberal reforms drove the abandonment of social policies to concentrate efforts instead on macroeconomic targets like reducing inflation and procuring economic growth. A narrow focus on GDP per capita and Consumer Price Index (CPI) neglected other aspects such as the increasing inequality of wealth and land, unemployment – including underemployment and informal work – and lack of access to social security, all of which are drivers of food insecurity.¹⁶

As perceived by the peasants and pointed out by Akram-Lodhi, Kay, and Chamorro among others, in Colombia the open market and neoliberal transformations widened the asymmetries in the countryside.¹⁷ The gap

¹¹ *Memories of Participant No.98.*

¹² Héctor Ochoa Díaz and Ángela Marcela Martínez Montealegre, “El comportamiento de la inflación en Colombia durante el período 1955-2004,” *Estudios Gerenciales* 21, no. 95 (June 2005): 75–93.

¹³ *Memories of Participant No.38.*

¹⁴ Carlos Felipe Jaramillo, *Liberalization and Crisis in Colombian Agriculture* (Routledge, 2019).

¹⁵ El Tiempo, “Arroceros en contra del diálogo con las guerrillas,” *El Tiempo*, January 11, 1990, 27507 edition.

¹⁶ Héctor Ochoa Díaz and Ángela Marcela Martínez Montealegre, “El comportamiento de la inflación en Colombia durante el período 1955-2004,” *Estudios Gerenciales* 21, no. 95 (June 2005): 75–93.

¹⁷ A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi and Cristóbal Kay, “Surveying the Agrarian Question (Part 2): Current Debates and Beyond,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37, no. 2 (April 2010): 255–84; Cristóbal Kay, “Latin America’s Agrarian Transformation: Peasantization and Proletarianization,” in *Disappearing Peasantries?: Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America*, ed. Deborah

between the ruling elites – including *terratenientes* – and the peasantries increased. The former turned into capitalist export-oriented agri-businessmen and partners of multinational food corporations and other powerful investors, and the latter into members of a petty commodity-producing peasant subsector – some of whom became proletarianised. This was the case for the coffee growers who are the lowest level of the contemporary pyramid of the world coffee oligopoly, as this testimony claims:

The break of the [coffee] agreement led to other struggles... Abrupt price drops, pests reducing the production, or the climate: all crises regardless of the cause, are income crises in the end... Each time it [the struggle] is more complicated because each time it is a more concentrated fight against much larger powers... The trade is increasingly unequal against producers and in favour of roasters, marketers and distributors.¹⁸

Neoliberal reforms, which also included substantial cuts to labour and social rights, were imposed upon citizens against their will, exhibiting the colonial legacy of power structures once again. In 1990, strikes and protests were arranged but repressed by the government with the threat of mass sackings. In November 1990, for example, when labour and other bills were debated in the Senate, the presidency declared protests illegal and promoted massive redundancies – workers were not even allowed to take phone calls during the day.¹⁹ Liberalisation, privatisation and the dismantling of state institutions also had neo-colonial antecedents. They were inflicted by Washington, the IMF and the World Bank, who threatened Colombia with economic blockades, as suggested by a Treasury Minister.²⁰

In 1994 the Social Agrarian Reform (SAR) was replaced with a market-led reform, the law 160 called 'National System of Agrarian Reform and Rural

Bryceson and Jos Mooij (Rugby, Warwickshire, United Kingdom: Practical Action Publishing, 2000), 123–58; Mauricio Chamorro Rosero, *La restructuración agraria neoliberal en Colombia: el cambio agrario para un nuevo régimen alimentario* (Egregius, 2020).

¹⁸ *Memories of Participant No.38 Oscar Gutiérrez (Interview 31), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Armenia, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).

¹⁹ El Tiempo, "Las centrales dicen que es una decisión irreversible para cívico el [L4] de noviembre," *El Tiempo*, October 19, 1990, El Tiempo OL; El Tiempo, "Las centrales obreras insisten en jornada de protesta para hoy, el gobierno autoriza despidos," *El Tiempo*, November 14, 1990, El Tiempo OL; AP-AFP-EFE-Reuter, "Las agencias de noticias encontraron que no hubo paro los colombianos fueron al trabajo pero no pudieron hablar" *El Tiempo*, November 15, 1990, El Tiempo OL.

²⁰ See Espinosa Valderrama, "La mal llamada apertura," *El Tiempo*, February 27, 1990, Año 80-No.27554 edition, sec. Espuma de los acontecimientos, El Tiempo OL, news.google.com/newspapers.

Development'.²¹ Consequently, land redistribution in Colombia stalled. The new system not only erased the social component of the reform, but it also resulted in a pro-market and depeasantising approach to rural development. It removed peasant agency and limited land allocation to peasants by making it completely dependent on an unstable market. On the positive side, this reform introduced aspects such as the inclusion of rural women, the preservation of *baldíos* for peasants, the limitation to assign *baldíos* to at most a 'familiar agricultural unit' UAF, and the creation of the Peasant Reservation Zones ZRC. However, the law's main purpose was to shake the land market. This goal was not accomplished, as recent studies by Villaveces-Niño and Faguet have demonstrated: almost every land awarded to landless peasants came from the public lands fund.²² In other words, the neoliberal reforms imposed in the Colombian agrarian sector in the 1990s constituted yet another de-facto counter-reform.

The abrupt deterioration of social and working conditions and open market deregulation were followed by state institutions' liquidation and the privatisation of 'inefficient' public enterprises.²³ Partially due to deregulated imports, IDEMA became almost obsolete. Credit conditions changed as well, which necessitated the agrarian bank's restructuring. This liquidation and/or restructuring of state agrarian institutions happened between 1997 and 2000. The disappearance of these institutions inhibited peasants' access to funding and soft credits and complicated the commercialisation of their products:

Farmers are emphatic in stating that the IDEMA has been one of the agricultural institutions that has served them best and they are aware that its liquidation will bring them problems with support prices in the market.²⁴

²¹ Colombia, Law 160: Agrarian Reform and Rural Development System.

²² Borrás, "Questioning Market-Led Agrarian Reform"; Antonio Hernández Gamarra, *Memorias 1994 - 1995* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1996); Villaveces-Niño and Sánchez, "Tendencias históricas y regionales de la adjudicación de baldíos en Colombia"; Jean Paul Faguet, Fabio Sánchez, and Juanita Villaveces, *Land Reform, Latifundia and Social Development at Local Level in Colombia, 1961-2010*, Serie Documentos Cede, 2015-06 (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes-Facultad de Economía-CEDE, 2015); Jean-Paul Faguet, Fabio Sánchez, and Marta-Juanita Villaveces, "The Perversion of Public Land Distribution by Landed Elites: Power, Inequality and Development in Colombia," *World Development* 136 (December 2020): 105036.

²³ Nicolas van de Walle, "Privatization in Developing Countries: A Review of the Issues," *World Development* 17, no. 5 (May 1989): 601-15.

²⁴ El Tiempo, "Liquidación del IDEMA no tiene reverso," *El Tiempo*, December 24, 1996, para. 1, El Tiempo OL.

IDEMA was a public buyer that maintained fair prices for local producers, called 'support prices'. It was established in 1968, and by 1996 required urgent upgrades and improvements such as decentralisation, inclusion of more products, storage capacity expansion and getting to more producers, since various peasants were left out of the scheme.²⁵ Throughout its existence it held the responsibility to maintain a level of staple production and affordability, which was key to preserve both national food security and food sovereignty.²⁶ Although President Samper (1994-1998) promised to improve it, he ended up using loopholes to ignore the Constitution, resorting to exceptional state powers and clientelist practices to achieve the dismantling of IDEMA, following international economic recommendations of cutting public spending.²⁷

The 1996 Law of 'rationalization of public spending', used to justify the elimination of the food stock control in Colombia, was enacted on New Year's Eve when the general public was unaware.²⁸ Meanwhile, the media failed to cover peasant opposition to these changes.²⁹ Consequently, from then onwards, essential staples of popular Colombian diets which were produced locally in abundance, such as maize and kidney-beans, began to be imported without any control.³⁰ The facilities that were previously at the service of post-purchase storage to the peasants were not transferred but leased, so now

²⁵ Particularly in regions far from the 'interior' such as the Caribbean, as concluded by Edgar E. Garcia Torres and Jairo E. Ramos Vasquez, "Estudio evaluativo del Instituto de Mercadeo Agropecuario, Idema en el Departamento de Bolívar 1980 - 1985" (Thesis, Cartagena, Bolívar, Colombia, Universidad de Cartagena, 1987).

²⁶ Fedesarrollo, "El Idema y La Política de Comercialización de Productos Agrícolas En Colombia," *Coyuntura Económica* 6 (April 1976): 121–46.

²⁷ Corte Constitucional, "Sentencia C-270-98: IDEMA-Naturaleza Jurídica/IDEMA-Supresión y Liquidación," Ref. Expediente D-1858 Sentencia de la Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia § (1998); Javier Duque Daza, "¿Presidentes legislando? las facultades legislativas en el presidencialismo colombiano 1991-2014," *Estudios Socio-Jurídicos* 17, no. 1 (January 20, 2015): 77–123.

²⁸ Congress of Colombia, "Law 134/1996," CXXXII. N. 42951 § (1996).

²⁹ See Luis Ramos Muegues and Gustavo Bush Gallardo, "Denuncia aclaratoria," Correspondencia interna ANUC departamentos de la Costa Caribe, September 22, 2000, Archivo de Derechos Humanos del Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica; León Zamosc, *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia: Struggles of the National Peasant Association, 1967-1981*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 58 (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); El Tiempo, "Liquidación del IDEMA no tiene reverso"; El Tiempo, "Garrote recibió la ley de reforma agraria," *El Tiempo*, February 29, 2000, El Tiempo OL.

³⁰ Gilberto Herrera Rojas, "Apertura económica- seguridad alimentaria y economía campesina," *Agronomía Colombiana* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 63–75.

peasants or intermediaries had to pay for their service through cooperatives.³¹ In 1999 *La Caja Agraria* (the Agrarian Bank) was also liquidated.³² After 2010, other peasant support institutions such as the Institute of the Agrarian Reform INCORA, the National Institute of Land Adaptation INAT, the National Institute of Fishing and Aquaculture INPA, and the Integral Rural Development DRI, were liquidated too, and government priorities were aligned with agro-investors' interests.³³

These neoliberal reforms and open market reforms were anti-peasant measures, since they dismantled every form of support to peasant economies to re-focus those resources on more profitable rural businesses. Colombia started its career in the global market under the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'s trade rules such as reciprocity and 'fair competition'.³⁴ However, in reality this was not the case. The inequality created by the open market was deepened when Colombia also advanced into free market negotiations with other countries. It was then, when maize, beans and wheat had already decayed, that a major hit came with the Free Trade Agreements (FTA), starting with the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in 2005. The agreements that Colombian peasants mention most often in oral interviews as having the most significant direct impact are the FTAs with the US and with the EU, both reached in 2012:

The FTA has impacted us by imports of corn, wheat, milk. Previously, we produced corn and wheat. Potatoes were produced, which have also been imported, and milk was produced for self-consumption. We found ourselves practically below prices and working at a loss ... instead of generating work, employment, we have to take jobs ... therefore some peasants went to the cities to form slums.³⁵

³¹ Carlos Murgas Guerrero, *Memorias Del Ministro al Congreso, 1998-1999 "El Campo, Un Buen Negocio Para Todos"* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 2000).

³² El Tiempo, "Liquidación de La Caja Agraria," *El Tiempo*, April 19, 1999.

³³ Andrés Fernández Acosta, *Memorias al Congreso de La República 2006-2010* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 2010).

³⁴ WTO and Information and Media Relations Division, *Understanding the WTO* (Geneva: World Trade Organization, 2008).

³⁵ *Memories of Participant No.88*.

The Agreement with the US, certainly, was negotiated to benefit the large landowning elites – traditionally cattle ranchers and more recently palm farmers, and in exchange, it sacrificed staple foods such as corn, rice, milk and wheat.³⁶

Following the FTAs, unfinanced and under-supported Colombian peasantries began to compete in unequal circumstances with European agriculture that was protected by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and with the highly subsidised American agriculture.³⁷ Adding to non-subsidised production, the absence of food stock planning and a lack of government support, Colombian peasants also dealt with structural disadvantages in sub-regions like Santurbán and Los Montes de María, such as the poor transport infrastructure. The natural topographical and biogeographical complexities alone in a megadiverse country – including pathogen biodiversity – are biophysical barriers which mean that competition in the food market, even under the best of circumstances, can never be even. The addition of free market competitions resulted, therefore, not in a situation of free competition among equals, but a highly unequal and asymmetric competition. This in turn resulted in forced displacement across Colombia, crop migrations and accelerated depeasantisation, all fuelling a loss of food sovereignty.

La Violencia: Armed Conflict and Terror Associated with Displacement and Land Grabbing

When they threatened us by saying they were going to take our daughter away and since they had already taken another girl, we were afraid... well we left...

³⁶ United States Trade Representative, “USA - Colombia TPA Final Text,” November 22, 2006, <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/colombia-tpa/final-text>; The European Union, The Republic of Colombia, and The Republic of Peru, “Trade Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States, of the One Part, and Colombia and Peru, of the Other Part,” § *Official Journal of the European Union* (2012).

³⁷ Sophia Murphy and Karen Hansen-Kuhn, “The True Costs of US Agricultural Dumping,” *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 35, no. 4 (August 2020): 376–90; Kaitlyn Spangler, Emily K. Burchfield, and Britta Schumacher, “Past and Current Dynamics of U.S. Agricultural Land Use and Policy,” *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 4 (July 21, 2020): 98; Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, “The Common Agricultural Policy: Separating Fact from Fiction” (European Commission, May 17, 2019), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/cap-separating-facts-from-fiction_en.pdf; European Commission, “Common Agricultural Policy,” European Commission, accessed February 25, 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy_en.

[In therapy] I painted a horse in a notebook and painted myself too. Then I said 'see, this was me at my farm'. The same thing happened to me then (crying), I was not even able to tell my story as, as it was...³⁸

I spent the last five days of the sixteen [of captivity], negotiating... They found a way to give my wife the information and she was already preparing [a rescue]... and it was negotiated....I came back home on the 16th day of November [1992]. After that, I started to rebuild. I managed to be economically and emotionally stable again... Then 'the others' [paramilitary] came in [19]98. I had to give up my land... it was the effort of all my life, my youth, my loves and my pension.... The land was my pension, my life.³⁹

Against the background of neoliberal economic change, other stressors such as physical and structural violence also intensified. The quotes above correspond to two peasants who belong to different sub-regions. They were both victims of the armed conflict and were both forcibly displaced from their lands in the 1990s. The first one could never recover his farm, and this severely affected his health both physical and mental, while the second was kidnapped twice by two different factions at war and is currently in the process of land restitution.

The armed violence of 1990s Colombia is usually associated with the illegal drug trade organisations. A new burgeoning class of illegal exporters, the '*narcos*', combined forces with paramilitary groups to encounter the multiple guerrilla groups in the 1980s, generating a 'dirty war' in both rural and urban spaces. These paramilitary forces became anti-peasant 'cleansers' of territories, through massacres, terror, and displacement. This period of violence, known as the second *La Violencia*, directly affected almost twenty percent of the Colombian population.⁴⁰ Its effects impacted all three sub-regions of study, but were particularly intense in Los Montes de María.

By the end of the 1980s, drug traffic in Colombia ignited a tremendous wave of terrorist violence associated with criminal and drug cartels' activities and, at the same time, in rural areas the armed confrontation between multiple guerrilla groups and the state escalated. In this context, the government of

³⁸ *Memories of Participant No. 18 Anonymous (Interview 13), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Villa María, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).*

³⁹ *Memories of Participant No. 47.*

⁴⁰ According to the Unique Register of Victims RUV, an official data base of victims of the Colombian armed conflict generated since the 1990s. República de Colombia, "Official Victims Registry (Registro Único de Víctimas (RUV) | RNI - Red Nacional de Información)," Unidad de Víctimas, ene 2018, <http://rni.unidadvictimas.gov.co/RUV>.

Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) planned a new modern Constitution, widening the participation of many different sectors of society, including guerrilla groups who were offered amnesty. Thus, with the promises of amnesty and direct involvement in the writing of a new Political Constitution, various guerrilla organisations including the peasant-related Workers' Revolutionary Party (PRT) – based in Los Montes de Maria and which included some frustrated ANUC ex-leaders – agreed to end the conflict in 1989.⁴¹ The Liberation Army (ELN) and the Revolutionary Forces (FARC) however refused to end hostilities, and a wave of rural armed conflict-related violence ensued. Towns and infrastructure were destroyed as ELN and FARC forces expanded their territory to 'occupy the spaces' left by the disarmed groups. This was a very painful transition for Colombians; five presidential candidates were killed between 1986 and 1995. However, by 1991, with cartel boss Pablo Escobar jailed, terrorist violence receded and a new highly inclusive and liberal Constitution was written.⁴² While cities grew and prospered the armed conflict concentrated in the rural areas – in peasant territories – and its main actors were guerrilla groups and illegal paramilitary armies.

Guerrilla groups such as ELN and FARC claimed to represent the peasants, but at the same time they were blackmailing, forcibly displacing and kidnapping them, as one of the peasant participants in this study revealed:

When I was kidnapped, I told a *guerrillero*, you do not sow *ñame* better than me, you do not work the fields holding a machete in your hand better than me, I am a peasant, why do you injure me this way?.⁴³

Kidnapping, among other criminal financing activities, was considered strategic by FARC to fund their territorial expansion ordered in their 1985 national conference.⁴⁴ A faction of the ELN competed with them for territorial

⁴¹ Rafael Pardo Rueda, *De primera mano: Colombia 1986-1994, entre conflictos y esperanzas*, 1. ed (Santafé de Bogotá: Cerec : Grupo Editorial Norma, 1996); Manuel Cristhian Amante Bejarano, "Historia del Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores de Colombia PRT (1978-1991)" (Magister en Historia, Bogotá, Colombia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2020); *Memories of Participant No.39*.

⁴² Pardo Rueda, *De primera mano*; El Tiempo, "Bienvenidos al futuro: Gaviria," August 8, 1990, Archivo Digital de Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo desde 1.990 - eltiempo.com, <https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-70158>.

⁴³ *Memories of Participant No.47*.

⁴⁴ Liliana Rojas Bautista, "Octava conferencia: La implementación de la lucha por todos los medios 1993-2001," in *Fenomenología y transformación del discurso de las FARC para la*

control of Los Montes de María from the early 1990s.⁴⁵ Although some peasants were also victims, the principal targets of these guerrilla groups were latifundia owners, who, in regions such as the Caribbean or the western savannahs, used to be cattle ranchers. Some new cattle businesses were then used by drug traffickers to circulate their money. Therefore, kidnapping put these guerrillas in direct confrontation with *narcos*. Consequently, a type of *autodefensa* (self-defence private army) emerged.⁴⁶ As a result of these developments, peasantries were trapped in the crossfire between these violent actors and the national army fighting in rural areas for the following decades.

During the Pastrana administration (1998-2002), another attempt for peace negotiations with the FARC failed. After the failed negotiations, the guerrillas moved from their concentration base in the western savannahs towards 'their former territories' in the North, crossing the western Andes and therefore the Santurbán *páramo*. Conflict there was marked by forcible recruitment of child soldiers, attacks on government apparatus, and hyper-violent tactics that forced peasants to sell their properties cheaply in order to run away.⁴⁷ The climax of this violence occurred when the Uribe government (2002-2010) started a 'war without quarter' against the guerrillas, called the '*Plan Patriota*' (Patriotic Plan) aided by the US.⁴⁸ This plan in practice involved widespread violations of international criminal and human rights law, including the mobilization of paramilitary forces to act as 'territory cleaners' and facilitating

estrategia y el poder: La transformación discursiva de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), ed. Cipriano Peña Chivatá, Daniel Arturo Palma Álvarez, and Carlos Rodríguez Barragán (Bogotá, Colombia: Escuela Superior de Guerra, 2017); Vélez Lesmes and María Alejandra, "FARC-ELN. Evolución y expansión territorial," *instname:Universidad de los Andes* (Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Economía, CEDE, 2000); Edgar Tellez, "Las FARC se preparan para la guerra total," *El Tiempo*, January 19, 1990, 27515 edition, sec. Judicial, news.google.com/newspapers; Mario Aguilera Peña, "Las FARC: Auge y Quiebre de Su Modelo de Guerra," *Análisis Político* 26, no. 77 (2013): 85–111.

⁴⁵ Aguilera Díaz, *Montes de María*.

⁴⁶ Ariel Fernando Ávila and Juan David Velasco, "Para-Politics, Drug Traffickers, Guerrillas and Votes: Revisiting the Failures of Democratic Theory from Colombian Case," *Papel Político* 17, no. 2 (December 2012): 371–421; Mariana Escobar, "Paramilitary Power and 'Parapolitics': Subnational Patterns of Criminalization of Politicians and Politicization of Criminals in Colombia" (phd, The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), 2013); Jasmin Hristov, "Legalizing the Illegal: Paramilitarism in Colombia's 'Post-Paramilitary' Era," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 42, no. 4 (July 2009): 12–19; Eric Wilson and Tim Lindsey, eds., *Government of the Shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty* (Pluto Press, 2015).

⁴⁷ *Memories of Participant No.98*.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Jones, "Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota: The Evolution of Colombia's National Strategy," *Veritas*, 2006, arsof-history.org; Oscar Palma, "A Model for Counterinsurgency Success? The Good, the Bad and the Ugly in the Struggle against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (2003–2012)," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, June 30, 2020, 1–24.

land seizures that were purported to eliminate guerrilla power bases but acted in practice as land grabs against peasant communities.⁴⁹

[People] identify the Self-Defence Forces (paramilitaries) and their biggest symbol, which is Castaño. Hinting that they have been the only ones capable of 'cleaning up territories' that were previously under the control of the guerrillas.⁵⁰

'Social cleansing', being an illegal, racist and classist display of actions to instil terror such as massacres targeting the most vulnerable, was already common in Colombian city slums. The rural *autodefensas* took these tactics to the countryside, developing a form of anti-peasantry campaign and peasant extermination: the '*limpieza social de territorios*' (social cleansing of territories).⁵¹ In this population-centric and civilianised insurgency, the greatest casualties were not among guerrillas but among peasants. Paramilitary groups joined land tenure conflicts to resolve them violently in favour of the companies – legal and illegal – that sponsored them. These new financial backers of depeasantisation included various national and international companies and agribusinesses, such as the banana company Chiquita Brands, oil company Ecopetrol, mining industries Drummond, Pacific Rubiales and AngloGold Ashanti, powerful cattle ranchers, and also agrarian elites such as the Colombian Society of Agricultures SAC, the Federation of Cattle Ranches FEDEGÁN, and some large-scale rice farms.⁵²

⁴⁹ Carlos J. L. Gómez, Luis Sánchez-Ayala, and Gonzalo A. Vargas, "Armed Conflict, Land Grabs and Primitive Accumulation in Colombia: Micro Processes, Macro Trends and the Puzzles in Between," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 42, no. 2 (March 4, 2015): 255–74; Grajales, "Land Grabbing, Legal Contention and Institutional Change in Colombia"; Soledad M Granada C, "Caracterización y Contextualización Del Desplazamiento Forzado Interno 1996-2006," *Documentos CERAC*, December 2008, Centro de recursos para el Análisis de Conflictos CERAC; Mabel González Bustelo, "Desterrados: el desplazamiento forzado sigue aumentando en Colombia," *Convergencia* 27 (2002): 41–78.

⁵⁰ D'Artagnan, "Carlos y su audiencia," *El Tiempo*, September 29, 2002, para. 6, El Tiempo OL.

⁵¹ Alvaro Villarraga Sarmiento and CNMH, *Violencia paramilitar en la Altillanura: Autodefensas Campesinas de Meta y Vichada* (Bogotá: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018); Renán Vega Cantor, "Colombia, Un ejemplo contemporáneo de acumulación por desposesión," *Theomai* 26 (2012): 1–25; Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, "Propiedad, seguridad y despojo: el caso paramilitar," *Revista Estudios Socio-Jurídicos* 16, no. 1 (2014): 43–74.

⁵² See Verdad Abierta, "Así investigan a financiadores del paramilitarismo," *Verdad Abierta* (blog), May 7, 2016, verdadabierta.com/asi-investigacion-a-financiadores-del-paramilitarismo/; Carlos Medina Gallego, "La economía de guerra paramilitar: una aproximación a sus fuentes de financiación," *Análisis Político* 18, no. 53 (January 1, 2005): 77–87; Jennifer Angélica Morales Correa, "Complicidad empresarial con grupos paramilitares: un análisis al caso colombiano," *Razón Crítica* 9 (July 2020): 43–67; Villarraga Sarmiento and CNMH, *Violencia paramilitar en la Altillanura*.

War as a counter-reform in the Caribbean Coast also took the form of another secret pact and *terratiente* coalition, the 2001 'Ralito Pact', signed by various famous paramilitary leaders, cattle ranchers, eleven parliamentarians, the governors of Córdoba and Sucre and mayors of various towns including some in the southern Montes de María.⁵³ Some of the paramilitary leaders who signed this pact perpetrated the Salado massacre in El Carmen de Bolívar. At least a hundred peasant men, women and children were tortured, decapitated and/or raped over one week in 2000. Similar events were carried out across Los Montes de María, forcing entire communities to abandon their lands. Investigations suggest that 354 peasants were killed in forty-two massacres between 1999 and 2001.⁵⁴ Peak displacement in the region was reached in 2002.⁵⁵ Small peasant settlements like Camarón in the Alta Montaña were almost empty, until the 2003-2006 period when the government reached a demobilisation accord with the paramilitaries.⁵⁶ By then, however, the anti-peasant 'territorial cleansing' had been consolidated as a geopolitical strategy of land grabbing and speculation.

Communities who remained on their lands faced continued instability and violence, both in terms of direct physical violence and in discrimination through behavioural control. White, Catholic and patriarchal behavioural parameters and sanctions were imposed, particularly on Afro-peasant women and the LGBT+ populations who were the main targets of such controls.⁵⁷ Some of them suffered periods of food scarcity and insecurity, including when the national army deployed starvation tactics to control locales.⁵⁸ As explored in the previous chapters, women have historically been the main victims of socio-political

⁵³ El Tiempo, "Este es el pacto secreto de Ralito," *El Tiempo*, January 19, 2007, El Tiempo OL; Wilson and Lindsey, *Government of the Shadows*; Escobar, "Paramilitary Power and 'Parapolitics'"; José Antonio Fernández, "'Parapolítica', el camino de la política en Colombia," *Política Exterior* 21, no. 118 (2007): 109–20.

⁵⁴ Gonzalo Sánchez G. and CNRR, eds., *La masacre de El Salado: esa guerra no era nuestra*, 1. ed. en Colombia, Pensamiento (Bogotá, Colombia: Taurus, 2009).

⁵⁵ Granada C, "Caracterización y Contextualización Del Desplazamiento Forzado Interno 1996-2006."

⁵⁶ *Memories of Participant No.67 Anonymous (Interview 44)*, Los Montes de María, Recording (Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).; Granada C, "Caracterización y Contextualización Del Desplazamiento Forzado Interno 1996-2006."

⁵⁷ Gonzalo Sánchez G. and Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación (Colombia), eds., *Mujeres y guerra: víctimas y resistentes en el Caribe Colombiano*, Primera edición, Taurus Pensamiento (Bogotá, Colombia: CNRR, Grupo de Memoria Histórica : Ediciones Semana : Taurus, 2011).

⁵⁸ *Memories of Participant No.60; Interview No.44, Memories of Participant No.67 Anonymous*, Los Montes de María, Recording (El Carmen de Bolívar, Bolívar, Colombia, 2019).

violence in agrarian communities, and this continued during *La Violencia*, with women being the most displaced demographic.⁵⁹

Thousands of families left Los Montes de María during *La Violencia*, being either forced to rent or sell their lands, or fleeing and being dispossessed entirely. The 2011 ‘Victim’s Law’ set the reparation and restitution framework for those who longed for return. Its process was very slow, and often involved fighting second and third occupants who could be other peasants or, more usually, powerful corporations with expensive lawyers.⁶⁰ Participant no 47, as many others, is still in the judicial process seeking reparation as a victim of the conflict. Three more displaced participants consulted by this research in the coffee sub-region have achieved sentences in their favour: one of them got a pension considerably lower than a subsistence wage, less than a dollar per day, and their land was never restored; and the other two, coming from the Coast, were re-established in the coffee region as administrator and *alimentadora* on a coffee-farm with no land of their own.⁶¹

Competing Explanations of the Impact of Climate Crisis

[Villa María] is the only municipality in the world that has five different types of water: We have two kinds of hot springs – one stings the eyes, and the other does not, we have glacial water, we have spring water, and salty water to cook - from the mines and in La Chiquita creek.⁶²

The crisis has been so severe. We do not know what to do because we do not even have enough to eat. The production was reduced due to El Niño and the climate change. We have no means to pay workers.⁶³

These quotes remind us that water is crucial for peasants’ survival as socio-Nature units and that the climate crisis, according to the peasants, has severely threatened this vital element.

Water and seeds are as important as land to peasants across the three case studies, and they are enshrined in peasants’ rights according to the

⁵⁹ Flor Edilma Osorio Pérez, “Forced Displacement among Rural Women in Colombia,” *Latin American Perspectives* 35, no. 6 (November 2008): 29–40.

⁶⁰ Congress of Colombia, “Law 1448/2011,” *Diario Oficial*. Año CXLVII. N. 48096 § (2011).

⁶¹ *Memories of Participant No.18; Memories of Participant No.36; Memories of Participant No.37; Memories of Participant No.47.*

⁶² *Memories of Participant No.14 Jorge Alberto González (Interview 9), Eje Cafetero, Recording (Villa María, Caldas, Colombia, 2019).*

⁶³ *Memories of Participant No.48.*

UNDROP and the food sovereignty framework. These sub-regions were, in fact, enormously rich – and diverse – in terms of water sources, as the quote above highlights, thanks to the presence of wetlands, glaciers and Andean moorlands.⁶⁴ Peasants in such regions as Los Montes de María and Santurbán – containing several headwaters – consider themselves not only harvesters of food but also harvesters of water.⁶⁵ However, moorland, peatland and glacial retreats in Andean highlands have been identified since the 1970s, as a consequence of global warming.⁶⁶ This has two main impacts on peasantries nearby: it has affected local hydrological dynamics, ecosystems, soil and subsoil composition and crops growth; and it has increased the instability and the risk of melting and flooding, endangering the surrounding settlements.⁶⁷ Historical accumulation of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) in the atmosphere has had devastating effects on tropical peasantries, which is why the climatic crisis is associated with environmental injustice.

In the coffee zone, other ecological disasters occurred towards the end of the twentieth century, such as the avalanches caused by melted ice from the 1985 Ruiz volcano eruption, or La Niña rains which exacerbated the soil cracks caused by the 1996 earthquake. These events demonstrated how vulnerable peasantries nearby were and how highly unprepared the country was in case of natural disasters or extreme climate variability.⁶⁸

El Niño droughts caused water scarcity and long electric cuts across the whole country in 1992, and in 2009 it reduced rains by about fifty per cent in the

⁶⁴ Glacier waters might refer to the ice on top of snow peaks, abundant in the central mountain chain of the Colombian Andes, at the east of the Cauca river where the *Parque de los Nevados* (The Glaciers Park) borders the coffee corridor.

⁶⁵ *Memories of Participant No.67; Memories of Participant No.88.*

⁶⁶ Thomas van der Hammen, “The Pleistocene Changes of Vegetation and Climate in Tropical South America,” *Journal of Biogeography* 1, no. 1 (March 1974): 3; Mark F. Meier, “Glaciers and Water Supply,” *Journal - American Water Works Association* 61, no. 1 (January 1969): 8–12; Wilhelm Lauer, “Ecoclimatological Conditions of the Paramo Belt in the Tropical High Mountains,” *Mountain Research and Development* 1, no. 3/4 (December 1981): 209; Julio C Postigo, “Desencuentros y (potenciales) sinergias entre las respuestas de campesinos y autoridades regionales frente al cambio climático en el Sur Andino peruano,” in *Cambio climático, movimientos sociales y políticas públicas: una vinculación necesaria*, ed. Augusto Castro, Pablo Chacón Cancino, and Latin American Social Sciences Council, 1. ed (Santiago: ICAL, 2013), 183–219.

⁶⁷ Postigo, “Desencuentros y (potenciales) sinergias entre las respuestas de campesinos y autoridades regionales frente al cambio climático en el Sur Andino peruano.”

⁶⁸ DPN (National Planning Department) et al., “CONPES 3700: Estrategia Institucional Para La Articulación de Políticas y Acciones En Materia de Cambio Climático En Colombia,” 3700 Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (CONPES) § (2011).

Caribbean and the Andes, according to IDEAM.⁶⁹ Peasantries with no irrigation infrastructure, dependent on stable rain regimes, lost their harvests and the agrarian sector had a major crisis: products such as bananas and cotton, destined both for export and domestic consumption, were severely impacted.⁷⁰

The winter cycle La Niña immediately followed in what is known as the 'El Niño Southern Oscillation' (ENSO). The 2010-2011 La Niña caused more than five thousand families to suffer an abnormal flooding in Los Montes de María. The impact was mainly concentrated in the municipalities of Córdoba, Zambrano and El Carmen de Bolívar.⁷¹ In Córdoba and Zambrano municipalities where swamps were dried to build a bridge breaking the hydrological connection with the Magdalena river, the area proved to be highly vulnerable to these events.⁷² Similarly, part of the *Alta Montaña* is located in El Carmen de Bolívar municipality, this is the zone that feeds the Matuya and El Playón reservoirs and consequently the Marialabaja irrigation district, and is therefore highly sensitive to floods and droughts. Due to the lack of hydrological studies when the bridge or the irrigation district were built, flooding and disasters affected the rice plantations and other crops in surrounding areas, and pushed prices down. The following El Niño drought, with temperatures above 40°C in the shade and a decrease of thirty per cent in rains, was aggravated by the introduction of water-intensive oil palm crops.⁷³ The high water footprint of palm crops in combination with the ENSO presented a double threat to food security in Los Montes de María: food crops were abolished and replaced following the market trend to supply palm fruit as raw material for biodiesel; and, additionally, water resources required by peasant communities were becoming scarce, absorbed by increasing hectares of industrial estates.

⁶⁹ Gloria León Aristizábal, "Aspectos de la circulación atmosférica de gran escala sobre el noroccidente de suramérica asociada al ciclo ENOS 2009-2010 y sus consecuencias en el régimen de precipitación en Colombia" (Bogotá, Colombia: Institute of hydrology, meteorology and environmental Studies - IDEAM, 2010), ideam.gov.co.

⁷⁰ Alfonso López Caballero, *Memorias al Congreso de La República 1991-1992* (Bogotá, Colombia: Ministerio de Agricultura - MADR, 1992).

⁷¹ Roxana Segovia de Cabrales, "Informe general de empalme - Gobernación de Bolívar - febrero 2012" (Gobernación de Bolívar, 2012).

⁷² Fieldwork observation.

⁷³ David Contreras, "El impacto de El Niño en Colombia," *Revista Fasecolda*, 2016; El Tiempo, "El fenómeno del Niño ya está en el país y nos está impactando," *El Tiempo*, December 21, 2018, sec. La Nación, El Tiempo OL, www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/fenomeno-del-nino-2018-2019-en-colombia-y-probables-afectaciones-307218.

This kind of conflict, evidenced by observation during this research fieldwork (see image 14), where competition for the common water resource caused tensions between upstream communities and downstream users who usually pay for its use, was common to the sub-regions of this study. It appeared particularly in Santurbán where international mining corporations increased competition for water. The images are of the El Playón reservoir and show a highly reduced water level during the El Niño cycle of May 2019. Traditional Afro-peasants in upper lands used this reservoir for fishing and transport, while rice and oil palm growers in lower lands use these scarce waters to irrigate their crops. These downstream water users pay, to be precise, for the mechanism services such as aqueducts and irrigation. Some *Montemariano* peasants call them 'acuatenedores' (water-lords/water-owners').⁷⁴



a)

⁷⁴ Verdad Abierta and Rutas del Conflicto, "Los Acuatenedores: la historia del agua, la tierra y el proyecto de la palma de aceite en María La Baja," 2018, <http://rutasdelconflicto.com/especiales/acuatenedores/index.html>.



b)

*Image 14. Photographs of El Playón reservoir in 2019
Photographs taken during this investigation fieldwork.*

These water tensions were fed not just by the ENSO and the advance of capitalist forces incorporating peasant lands into more internationally profitable business, but also by the combination of state apparatus, elites and the multiple kinds of violence exercised upon peasantries. These intersecting stressors are synergetic and mutually intensifying.

Synergies Among Multiple Stressors and the Rise of the *acuatendientes*

The combination of neoliberal market reforms, violent territorial cleansing and climatic pressures, which were happening simultaneously in Colombia, intensified the individual impacts that any of those stressors could have presented separately in the sub-regions studied. For years, the peasant displacement was mostly blamed on the armed conflict factor, and this is partially true. However, the problem was not merely violence and warfare. In fact, the armed violence usually had economic motifs behind it; sometimes it was a method rather than a factor of depeasantisation: a strategy of territorial cleansing to dispute peasant resources. This forced many communities and families to leave their own lands and undermined peasant economies, and thereby damaged food sovereignty. The next two sections focus on two case studies to analyse both these synergies as depeasantisation drivers in the territories, and the contribution of agrarian policies to this end. These sections support an argument previously made by other chapters around the decreased food sovereignty in Colombia being driven in part by a combination of neo-

colonial and internally colonial forces. It shows how these multiple stressors were driven not just by governments, *terratenientes* or agrarian elites but also by multinational corporations and powerful capitalist interests in a highly uneven competition for peasant resources. The analysis focuses on the two most salient examples found by this research: first, the oil palm penetration in Los Montes de María; and second, the twofold anti-peasant pressure in Santurbán from large-scale gold mining and city-based conservationists. Although these socio-environmental conflicts around water resources mostly emerged in the twenty-first century, they were years in the making.

The Palm Oil and 'Biofuel Dispositif' Counter-reform

There was a time when the ANUC in Los Montes de María could achieve land distribution... but as a result of the 2000-2010 violence, those lands were lost... there was a massive purchase of land in Montes de María. Who was behind all this? Well, the state and the rulers on duty, who have made the monocultures of palm, teak, eucalyptus and all those woods [that] took over all Montes de María. Just in María La Baja there are around ten thousand to fifteen thousand hectares of palm.⁷⁵

Whilst peasants think of their land as the means to exercise autonomy and relationality with the territory, national and local governments endorsed powerful elites who rotated between public and private roles in the agricultural sector and held very different conceptions of the land. The Office of Agriculture and Rural Development of Bolívar in 2019 summarised the government-elites' vision: "Los Montes de María is a region with an irrigation district, fertile soils, an agro-industrial, livestock, forestry and artisan vocation, it has an agro-export culture and in recent years an important oil palm agro-industrial complex has been developing".⁷⁶ Noticeably, *Montemariano* peasants were absent from this distorted image.

The Marialabaja irrigation district was conceived by INCORA as a mechanism to make peasantries 'productive', to facilitate rice crops as part of the Green Revolution. However, in the globalisation era, the government and

⁷⁵ *Memories of Participant No.39.*

⁷⁶ Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural de Bolívar, "Plan departamental de extensión agropecuaria 2019" (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2019), 12, minagricultura.gov.co/ministerio/direcciones/Documents/PDEA%27s%20Aprobados/PDEA%20Bol%C3%ADvar.pdf.

agro-investors saw the irrigation district as a business opportunity. Greater profit could be obtained by replacing peasant food production with extractive activities. These were highly demanded by the market and therefore were attractive to investors, such as large scale tropical agroindustry or mega-mining.

Los Montes de María in the 1990s was a territory in dispute. The remaining guerrilla groups wanted to 'occupy' the vacant space left by the demobilised PRT. As the section's opening quote shows, for the government and the agro-businessmen, since the times of the tobacco bonanza in the mid twentieth century, this was a rich estate of fertile soils that were ripe for exploitation. However, peasantries occupied the land. The SAR had initially seemed to favour industrial interests with the construction of the irrigation district megaproject and the promotion of rice monocultures in Los Montes de María in 1966. However, during Lleras-Restrepo's administration (1966-1970) and the ANUC's active land recuperations, the SAR worked as a programme of true land democratisation, allowing the re-establishment of peasant culture in the sub-region. Even though the *terratiente* counter-reform in 1972 put an end to this process, various plots were successfully assigned either individually or as collective lands. This means that by the 1980s the sub-region was a cluster of different peasant communities, a patchwork coexisting with some industrial farming and cattle ranching. However, the coincidence and combined effect of the peasant bankruptcies associated with open market conditions and the violent displacement caused by the armed conflict in the 1990s, made various peasant lands vacant again, and at bargain prices. Wood for export and oil palm industries slowly penetrated into Los Montes de María during those years.

According to Victor Patiño – early promoter of the oil palm in Colombia – the development of palm plantations was not consistent with peasant economies.⁷⁷ As with sugar estates in the Caribbean, this was an agrarian business that required industrialisation and immediate transformation of the raw material because of the decomposition rate of the palm fruit once separated from the tree. Although it started to be cropped in Colombia in the 1970s, it was not until the 2000s, when investors had access to more *Montemariano* peasant lands, that they established the first palm plots and an oil-extractor processor

⁷⁷ Patiño Rodríguez, *Esbozo histórico agropecuario del periodo republicano en Colombia*.

plant, and reached sufficient production levels to generate large scale profits.⁷⁸ Its continuous growth was accelerated by two factors: a big package of rural policies which stimulated it, and in the case of Los Montes de María, conflict-related population displacement which made land available at low prices. Contrary to its advance in other countries where this agroindustry was established in large estates after processes of massive deforestation, in Colombia it has not touched a hectare of native wilderness.⁷⁹ Each and every hectare of palm crop in the country comes from the '*volteo de cultivos*' (crop swap): mostly from replacing food production, as occurred in Los Montes de María. In other word, oil palm's rapid growth has been achieved by undermining food security and food sovereignty through depeasantisation.

From the early 1990s the major oil palm investors and agribusiness staffing the FEDEPALMA board lobbied for the creation of an internal market to constrain national sales. This was eventually achieved by the creation and enforcement of local legislation, which fashioned in turn a perverse stimulus to change land soil use and dedicate increasing areas of land and wetland not to human food but rather to biofuel crops. This land use transition has its roots in previous counter-reformist events such as the Chicoral Pact and Green Revolution ideas – a prioritisation of profitability over peasant rights.⁸⁰ The 'soil-swap' or 'crop-swap', as peasants call it, started slowly in Los Montes de María in the 1980s according to satellite image studies by Moreno-Saboyá, when food

⁷⁸ Patiño Rodríguez.

⁷⁹ FEDEPALMA, "Sector palmero no es motor de deforestación en Colombia," Press Release, *FEDEPALMA* (blog), 2020, web.fedepalma.org/Carta_abierta_de_Fedepalma_sobre_compromiso_con_la_no_deforestacion_en_Colombia; Raquel Vélez Peña, "Aceite de palma colombiano frente al ranking de deforestación global," *El Palmero - FEDEPALMA*, April 2016; FEDEPALMA, "Fedepalma alerta sobre posible deforestación en zonas de exclusión legal y de importancia ambiental y social en la Amazonía colombiana," Press Release, *FEDEPALMA* (blog), 2018, web.fedepalma.org/fedepalma-alerta-sobre-posible-deforestacion-en-zonas-de-exclusion-legal-y-de-importancia-ambiental-y-social-en-la-amazonia-colombiana; Paul Richard Furumo and T. Mitchell Aide, "Characterizing Commercial Oil Palm Expansion in Latin America: Land Use Change and Trade," *Environmental Research Letters* 12, no. 2 (February 2017): 024008; Varsha Vijay et al., "The Impacts of Oil Palm on Recent Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss," ed. Madhur Anand, *PLOS ONE* 11, no. 7 (July 27, 2016): e0159668.

⁸⁰ See Jens Mesa, "Situación actual y perspectivas del cultivo de la palma aceitera en Colombia," *Revista Palmas* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 1990): 61–68; Nivea Santarelli Franco, "El aceite de palma, materia prima de la industria de aceites y grasas en Colombia | Revista Palmas," *Revista Palmas*, 1991, Centro de Información y Documentación Palmero - Federación Nacional de Cultivadores de Plama de Acite FEDEPALMA.

crops were replaced by pastures.⁸¹ In 1999 oil palm was introduced in María La Baja through the efforts of the businessman Carlos Murgas-Guerrero, a former Minister of Agriculture (1998-1999) turned head of the business group Oleoflores, partner of the New Britain Palm Oil Limited, a supplier of Nestlé.⁸² Murgas, whilst Minister of Agriculture, developed his vision for a better exploitation of the Irrigation District and attracted several bankrupted rice farmers as partners to create the Association of Palm Growers of the Irrigation District of María La Baja ASOPALMA – a form of ‘Productive and Social Alliance’.⁸³ These peasants, who were broken by debts or had unclear land title situations with INCORA, found in ASOPALMA their only chance of survival.⁸⁴ Interviews conducted by Menco-Rivera in 2009 with peasant women in María La Baja corroborate evidence collected by this project showing an inverse correlation between oil palm penetration and food security indicators, and showing how peasants were forced into leaving food production behind. The following submissions from interviewed participants are illuminating here:

“...new palm growers are still paying debts to the bank from the time when they were rice farmers. [We] were abandoned, no one opened us any doors at all ... [The investors] came to live from our lands... we did not want to rent them; but the peasants were on the ground and no one gave us a hand to help us stand-up.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Yenny Carolina Moreno, “Cambio de la cobertura de la tierra en María La Baja, Bolívar, entre 1984 y 2015 por proceso de despojo de tierras” (Trabajo de grado para optar por el título de Magister en Gestión Ambiental, Bogotá, Colombia, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2016).

⁸² FEDEPALMA, “Municipios identificados con cultivos de palma de aceite” (Colombia: FEDEPALMA, 2020), <http://sispa.fedepalma.org/sispaweb/default.aspx?Control=Pages/areas;VerdadAbiertaandRutasdelConflicto>, “Carlos Roberto Murgas Guerrero: Más de 40 años dominando la palma de aceite,” Los Acuatenedores (Colombia: Rutas del Conflicto, 2018), rutasdelconflicto.com/especiales/acuatenedores/murgas.html; Carlos Roberto Murgas Guerrero, Estrecha para Rutas del Conflicto, 2018, Rutas del Conflicto, rutasdelconflicto.com/especiales/acuatenedores/documentos/Respuestas_Carlos_Jose_Murgas.pdf; Grupo Empresarial Oleoflores, “Oleoflores :: HISTORY,” Commercial, accessed January 6, 2021, https://www.oleoflores.com/about/historia_en.php; Nestlé, “Palm Oil Responsible Sourcing at Nestlé,” Progress Report (Nestlé S.A., 2019), www.nestle.com/sites/default/files/2020-01/responsible-palm-oil-sourcing-2019.pdf.

⁸³ Verdad Abierta and Rutas del Conflicto, “Carlos Roberto Murgas Guerrero: Más de 40 años dominando la palma de aceite”; Murgas Guerrero, Estrecha para Rutas del Conflicto; Gustavo Adolfo Herrera-Sebá and Vicente Cumplido-Hernandez, “Implicaciones de la palma de aceite en la estructura productiva agrícola y la seguridad alimentaria del municipio de María La Baja - Bolívar” (Msc. Desarrollo & Ambiente, Cartagena, Colombia, Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar, 2016).

⁸⁴ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁸⁵ Interview conducted by Menco-Rivera to a palm grower woman from ASOPALMA in María La Baja in 2009. In: Daniel Menco Rivera, “Palma aceitera y la seguridad alimentaria en María La Baja, Montes de María. 2000-2008,” *Observatorio de La Economía Latinoamericana*, no. 157 (2011): 17.

There is hunger here now, as was not seen for a long time... [peasants] never lacked for [food] before, had their yucca, plantain... now, they work in the palm crops, cannot bring home anything [food surplus] anymore, and the day wage is ridiculous. You do not have a contract, so you do not have rights or social benefits... Food prices rise in the municipality due to the massive plantation of oil palm. Even a palm grower reckons that the problem of the food crisis has confronted palm crops with traditional food crops in the territory, claiming that those crops [oil palm] are generating relative wealth for the peasants.⁸⁶

Open market policies and FTAs have been mentioned as a factor deterring food crop production and driving peasants to focus on oil palm. However, as mentioned earlier, neither the open market nor the FTAs were entirely 'free'. The Colombian government did not emulate their American or European peers in subsidising and favouring their local food production but, interestingly, they did subsidise oil palm. Research evidence demonstrates that enormous state intervention was advanced to drive the palm oil boom. Agricultural regulations between 2000 and 2008 worked to put a large part of the agricultural chain, from the field to consumption, and the public funds for agriculture at the service of the biofuel industry. First, under the pretext of improving air quality in big cities and reducing the use of fossil fuels, a percentage of alcohols such as ethanol for motor vehicles was enforced by law; that is, local demand was fabricated – as FEDEPALMA demanded.⁸⁷ Secondly, land use changes – the crop-swaps – were stimulated through rent extensions; strictly speaking, it was ordered that those crops destined for biofuel production were untaxed.⁸⁸ Thirdly, industrialisation, commercialisation, international investment and exports were facilitated through a series of laws. Since 2000 many incentives for the development of biofuel projects were created, such as special soft credits, tax deductions and exemptions to both production and

⁸⁶ Menco Rivera, "Palma aceitera y la seguridad alimentaria en María La Baja, Montes de María. 2000-2008."

⁸⁷ The percentage of ethanol has been regulated since 2001. It was set at five per cent in biodiesel in 2008, and since 2010 the fuel must be ten per cent biodiesel. See: Congress of Colombia, "Law 693/2001," Diario Oficial N. 44564 § (2001); DPN (National Planning Department) et al., "CONPES 3510: Lineamientos de Política Para Promover La Producción Sostenible de Biocombustibles En Colombia," 3510 Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social (CONPES) § (2008).

⁸⁸ By law 939/2004: Congress of Colombia, "Law 939/2004," Diario Oficial N. 44778 § (2004).

demand, subsidies and land acquisition facilitation.⁸⁹ Since 2001, when the negotiations of the Free Trade Area of the Americas started, some local food crops were put at risk against cheaper imports. At the same time, the Colombian negotiators favoured particular products; one of their main demands was to eliminate taxes on Colombian oil, making oil palm one of the few Colombian winners in the various FTAs' negotiations from then on.⁹⁰

All the above reforms were developed to favour investors who became new agrarian elites, forming yet another *terrateniente* coalition. Although Colombian agrarian history has considered among rural actors the *terratenientes* as the peasants' main oppressors and competitors, I have argued throughout this thesis that they never worked alone but in collusion with either local or national authorities, and this another example. The 'biofuel dispositif' is the name given by Coronado and Dietz to this pro-palm project as a full package of policies, strategies, institutions, discourses and even ideologies colluding to benefit this particular sector.⁹¹

The incentives created to push local peasants towards working with the oil palm investors acted at the same exact time that the paramilitary terror was spread through the sub-region, dropping land prices hugely and forcing other peasants to rent their lands for minimum prices or even just abandoning them. Thus, this chapter argues that the biofuel dispositif was related not only to the loss of food sovereignty, but also to human rights violations: it took advantage of the terrible human rights situation to absorb peasant lands and waters. According to the Centre of Economic Studies on Labour CEDETRABAJO, between 2001 and 2012 almost five thousand hectares of food crops – mainly rice, maize, cassava and plantain – were replaced by palm in María La Baja alone, representing 45 thousand tons less food, all staples that were the fundamental base of the *Montemariano* diet. As figure 15 shows, the first stages

⁸⁹ DPN (National Planning Department) et al., CONPES 3700: Estrategia institucional para la articulación de políticas y acciones en materia de cambio climático en Colombia.

⁹⁰ César Enrique Ortiz Guerrero, "El ALCA y la agricultura: un análisis crítico del caso colombiano," in *El ALCA y sus peligros para América Latina*, ed. Jaime Estay Reyno, Germán Sánchez Daza, and Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 1. ed, Colección Campus Virtual de Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales CLACSO (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005), 285–326.

⁹¹ Sergio Coronado Delgado and Kristina Dietz, "Controlling Territories, Restructuring Socio-Ecological Relations: The Globalization of Agrofuels and Their Local Effects, the Case of Montes de María in Colombia (Controlando Territorios, Reestructurando Relaciones Socio-Ecológicas: La Globalización de Agrocombustibles y Sus Efectos Locales, El Caso de Montes de María En Colombia)," *Iberoamericana* 13, no. 49 (March 2013): 93–115.

of this transformation occurred simultaneously with *La Violencia* territorial cleansing.

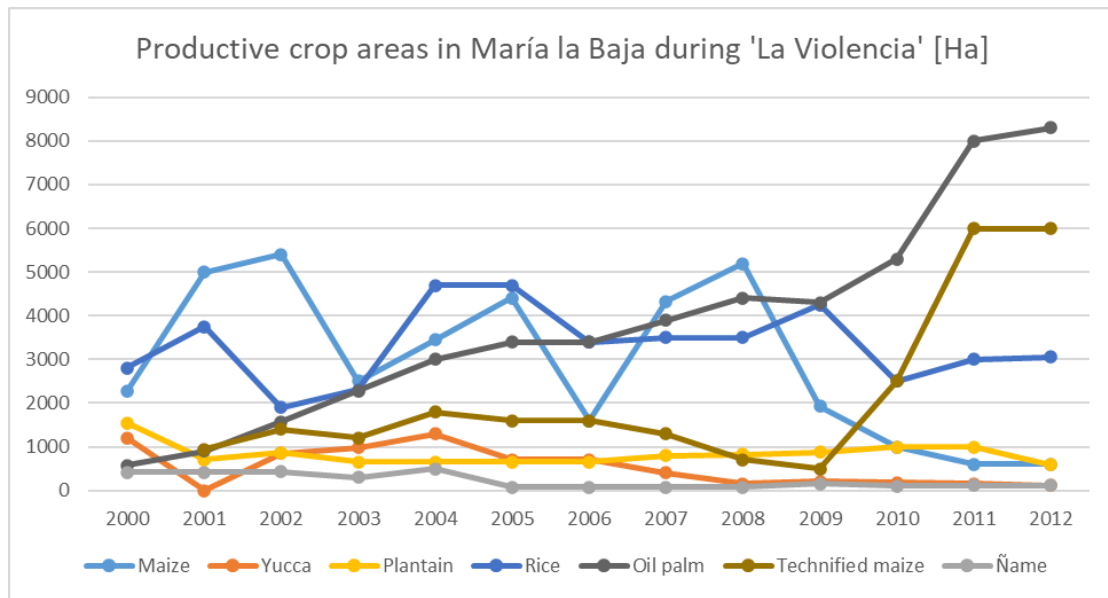


Figure 15. Crop growth in María La Baja during the years of La Violencia
 Author's elaboration based on Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural de Bolívar and complemented by Herrera-Sebá.⁹²

Peasant testimonies collected by both this study and Moreno's confirm that large extensions of pastures, as well as many more *pancoger* and temporary crops – mainly maize and rice, but also yucca and other local staples – started to be migrated to oil palm from 1999. Satellite images from Moreno's study also record a decrease of five percent in continental waters and wetlands in María La Baja, between 1984 and 1999 and of thirty per cent between 1999 and 2015, which coincided with times and areas of desiccation for palm

⁹² Secretaría de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural de Bolívar, "PDEA Bolívar 2019"; Herrera-Sebá and Cumplido-Hernandez, "Implicaciones de la palma de aceite en la estructura productiva agrícola y la seguridad alimentaria del municipio de María La Baja - Bolívar."

monocultures.⁹³ This data is relevant to demonstrate that oil palm not only grabbed lands in Los Montes de María, but also water resources. This gave rise to the current conflict over the use of the irrigation district and its reservoirs' waters. ASOPALMA involved a number of chairpersons from the ASOMARIALABAJA association, current manager of the district, and although some rice farmers have been rotating among the highest roles on its board, the palm industry became its main body of patrons.⁹⁴

In 2007 ASOPALMA finished the construction of the first methyl-ester (biodiesel) production plant in Colombia in María La Baja.⁹⁵ The industrial palm processing project in María la Baja was forty per cent subsidised using the Public Fund for Rural Development (DRI); the rest was financed by more public money from the Agricultural Financing Fund (Finagro).⁹⁶ It could be argued that this project, by default, benefited some peasants that are part of ASOPALMA, therefore the use of all this public money might be justifiable. However, I argue that there is social and food injustice in the fact that those same peasants never received anything substantial when they asked for the same advantages to grow food. On the contrary, they were forced to face the banks and their usurious credits because Finagro rejected them. Agrarian governmental authorities supported oil palm projects rather than peasant projects or food production, despite knowing Colombia was experiencing food insecurity problems. Even though the 1991 Constitution mandates that land uses shall prioritise food production over any other activity, the rural development model that was simultaneously adopted was going in the entire opposite direction. In 2013, FEDEPALMA was the agrarian guild that received the most funds as incentive for technical assistance in Colombia.⁹⁷

Peasant leaders in the *Camarón* settlement showed this researcher in 2019 how some in their community have entirely changed their agrodiverse lands for monocultures of oil palm, bringing this invasive and thirsty vegetation closer to the exhausted reservoirs' banks.⁹⁸ They are convinced that this

⁹³ Moreno, "Cambio de la cobertura de la tierra en María La Baja, Bolívar, entre 1984 y 2015 por proceso de despojo de tierras."

⁹⁴ *Memories of Participant No.68.*

⁹⁵ Grupo Empresarial Oleoflores, "Oleoflores :: HISTORY."

⁹⁶ Aguilera Díaz, *Montes de María.*

⁹⁷ Rubén Darío Lizarralde, "Informe de rendición pública de cuentas 2013-2014, Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural MADR" (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2014).

⁹⁸ Fieldwork observation.

advance of oil palm hectares upon their lands had exacerbated extreme droughts and depleted the water they depend on. Local reservoirs have been the basis of their food security and food sovereignty, but also transport, and they feed peasants' animals, crops and the dry native forests peasant communities have taken care of for generations. The peasants would recount how, gradually, the palms reached higher lands, changing soils and displacing the local fauna, accumulating mud in the banks. Every time a peasant migrated and the land changed its use to expand the oil palm plantation, this not only increased the impact on the surrounding Nature and local food sovereignty, but also contributed to create a palm confinement around the *Alta Montaña* peasantry as a collective. With each incursion, the community competing asymmetrically with the monoculture lords for the environmental management of higher waters was weakened, and the capitalist empire seems to be surrounding the peasants who are limited to an increasingly reduced territory.

Violent armed conflict and the proliferation of the oil palm industry in Los Montes de María were strongly linked to deterioration of land ownership, agrarian structures and food security indicators. The interviewed *Alta Montaña* inhabitants here concur with several studies conducted in this region which, although cautious about pointing out direct causality between the agro-industry and armed conflict, have proved the correlation extensively. They also assert palm elites' direct relation with socioenvironmental conflicts.⁹⁹ Rangel and Ramírez-Tobón, in a study financed by FEDEPALMA, made an effort in 2009 to dismiss the relationship between oil palm and displacement as a 'myth' based on the argument that most of the territories where displacement occurred did not necessarily migrate to oil palm.¹⁰⁰ This deduction was not only flawed, but it

⁹⁹ Camilo Rey Sabogal, "Análisis espacial de la correlación entre cultivo de palma de aceite y desplazamiento forzado en Colombia," *Cuadernos de Economía* 32, no. SPE61 (2013): 683–718; Leonardo Jiménez Molinello, *El panorama del sector agropecuario en el municipio de Marialabaja-Bolívar*, Documento de Investigación 37 (Cartagena, Bolívar, Colombia: Cedetrabajo Cede Cartagena, 2017); Alen Castaño, "Socio-Environmental Conflicts Caused by Palm Oil Farming: The Case of María La Baja in Montes De María - Conflictos socioambientales ocasionados por el cultivo de palma aceitera: el caso de María La Baja en Montes de María," *Jangwa Pana* 17, no. 2 (May 3, 2018): 248–57; Natalia Estefanía Ávoña González, "Palma aceitera: conflictos y resistencias territoriales en María La Baja-Bolívar, Colombia (Estudio de caso) o Oil palm: territorial conflicts and resistances in María La Baja-Bolívar, Colombia," *Eutopía. Revista de Desarrollo Económico Territorial* 8 (December 2015): 113–24; Moreno, "Cambio de la cobertura de la tierra en María La Baja, Bolívar, entre 1984 y 2015 por proceso de despojo de tierras."

¹⁰⁰ Alfredo Rangel Suárez et al., eds., *La palma africana: mitos y realidades del conflicto* (Bogotá, D.C: Fundación Seguridad & Democracia, 2009).

was also contradicted by the accumulated evidence in the following years. In the case of El Carmen de Bolívar, the spatial econometrics method used by Rey-Sabogal in 2013 was by contrast highly convincing, and confirmed the peasants' observations.¹⁰¹ Additionally, a more recent study by Vargas-Reina went further, demonstrating how the rapid land grabbing and agricultural 'land shift' in El Carmen de Bolívar was orchestrated and executed by a coalition between non-local investors, local elites, politicians and paramilitaries to accumulate lands during wartime between 2008 and 2011.¹⁰² Peasants and academics have both argued that the combined action of paramilitary armed violence and years of extreme weather changes were instrumental to the land prices' drop and the forced displacement that made properties vacant for elites' market-based coalitions and their projects.¹⁰³ It is undeniable that oil palm promoters took advantage of a terrifying situation to incorporate peasant lands into the business at high food sovereignty, social and environmental costs.

The argument advanced by the Agricultural Minister Murgas to justify the instigation of a massive pro-biofuel institutional apparatus was that rural development could only be achieved through 'volume of export-oriented production' and, therefore, through the 'integration' of small 'agro-businesses' in becoming subordinated to the industrial rule.¹⁰⁴ Certainly, this apparatus would later serve as scaffolding to his own business. Some peasants caught in the 'strategic alliance' offered by Murgas and his association recognise the economic benefits brought to the region in such time of need. Yet, they have expressed preference for their traditional food-sufficient and autonomous lifestyle, and have reiterated that they had no options, and therefore, were forced into the new structure.¹⁰⁵ The business opportunity that Murgas and his partners propitiated was no social justice enterprise – he is one of the most

¹⁰¹ Rey Sabogal, "Análisis espacial de la correlación entre cultivo de palma de aceite y desplazamiento forzado en Colombia."

¹⁰² Jenniffer Vargas Reina, "Coalitions for Land Grabbing in Wartime: State, Paramilitaries and Elites in Colombia," *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, January 6, 2021, 1–21.

¹⁰³ *Memories of Anonymous Participants No. 64, 65, 66; Memories of Participant No.67*; Sergio Coronado Delgado and Kristina Dietz, "Controlando Territorios, Reestructurando Relaciones Socio-Ecológicas: La Globalización de Agrocombustibles y Sus Efectos Locales, El Caso de Montes de María En Colombia," *Iberoamericana (2001-)* 13, no. 49 (2013): 93–115; Berman Arévalo, "The 'Ruinous Failure' of Agrarian Reform in Key of Blackness," May 15, 2019; Rodríguez Triana, "Caracterización de Los Conflictos Territoriales En La Región de Montes de María."

¹⁰⁴ Murgas Guerrero, *Memorias Del Ministro al Congreso, 1998-1999 "El Campo, Un Buen Negocio Para Todos."*

¹⁰⁵ *Memories of Participant No.67; Memories of Participant No.68.*

prosperous agro-entrepreneurs in the Colombian Caribbean, and one of the main buyers of hundreds of Afro-peasant lands in Los Montes de María during *La Violencia*.¹⁰⁶

The accelerated, violent and extensive soil cover changes partially explain why the *Alta Montaña* inhabitants considered the palm plantation a determining factor in the proliferation of the oomycete responsible for their avocado trees' disease and, consequently, why they hold the Colombian state responsible (see the segment 'The Avocado March' in Chapter 4).¹⁰⁷ Yet the public support for peasant food production projects has been considerably less impactful than the opportunities and funding destined for agribusiness projects. A vicious circle thus emerged, with limited possibilities forcing more peasants into accepting alliances with powerful investors and/or politicians like Murgas to secure a living. This not only perpetuated the depeasantisation process and subjugated peasants to new capitalist *terratenientes* in Los Montes de María, but also simultaneously acted as a deterrent to food production. This legal form of oil palm land grabbing has been damaging food sovereignty and local food security directly in terms of local availability of their usual food staples. Reparation initiatives remain limited – and very slow, as already evidenced – while those factors which contributed to the peasants' oppression are not being addressed in Los Montes de María even today.

This case therefore raises further questions linked to the past but that today remain unanswered: How to bring the peasant's avocado, plantain, *ñame* and maize food chains back to life under increasingly hostile market circumstances? How to democratise the scarce water remaining in the irrigation district dams that were built upon the Nomembromes and Palo Alto Hicotea ancestors' graves, but which had been administered by powerful economic interests? When will the Colombian state return all the lands that INCORA gave to peasants, but that *La Violencia* took from them – considering that almost a

¹⁰⁶ Natalia Espinosa Rincón and Juan Guillermo Ferro Medina, "Monitoreo de transacciones de tierras en Colombia - Proyecto Land Matrix" (Colombia: Observatorio de Territorios Étnicos y Campesinos - Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2017), <https://www.semiaridos.org/files/2017/01/Anexo3.-Informe-Javeriana.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Becerra Becerra et al., *Un bosque de memoria viva: desde la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar*, Carmen Andrea Becerra Becerra et al., *Documento metodológico sobre la formulación y el desarrollo de procesos de memoria locales con la participación de la comunidad: aportes desde la experiencia de la Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar* (Bogotá, Colombia: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018).

decade after the Victims Law, less than five per cent of the victims have been fully assisted?¹⁰⁸ Pushing for answers to these questions, many peasantries in Colombia, including the *Alta Montaña* inhabitants, turned to disruptive civil disobedience and protest marches along major roads to make their voices heard in 2013.

While the *Alta Montaña* peasants organised the ‘avocado march’ in 2013, the *junca* onion growers from the Berlín settlement in the core of the Santurbán *páramo* region joined the Great Strike by obstructing the only paved road that connects Bucaramanga City in Santander with Cucuta City in Northern Santander.¹⁰⁹ While the repressive response to the strike was highly violent in the coffee zone, peasant mobilisations in the *páramo* and in Los Montes de María both managed to achieve spaces of dialogue between their departmental administrations and their respective communities. In Santurbán, the strike occurred in the midst of one of the worst crises within its socio-environmental conflict, the moment when the national park was created, leaving the peasants confined inside. The higher peasant settlements in Santurbán – Berlín, Picacho, Pachacual, La Laguna – are, in fact, distributed precisely along the main road and they could potentially cause greater disruptions. These actions were preliminary attempts at organising and mobilising *paramuno* peasantries, who in comparison with their coffee grower and *Montemariano* peers have been traditionally non-reactive and non-activist peasantries. It took a strong sense of danger and fear to move these peasantries into action, the causes of which will be reviewed in the next segment.

Santurbán: Eco-capitalism and Environmentalisms in Dispute

Ten hours’ walk from here, is where the large *frailejones* are, tall as us, and the lagoons, but none of us go there. Only those damn environmentalists go to ruin those areas... they knock down those hundred-year-old plants. Those are sacred places we do not visit, but foreigners do come to fuck things up and say they do it for the environment... what kind of feeling has an environmentalist who comes

¹⁰⁸ RNI - Red Nacional de Información, “RUV,” Unidad para las Víctimas, January 1, 2020, <https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co/es/ruv/37385>.

¹⁰⁹ RCN Radio, “Cebolleros bloquearon la vía Bucaramanga - Cúcuta,” Radio station, *RCN Radio* (blog), August 27, 2013, rcnradio.com/colombia/cebolleros-de-santander-bloquearon-la-bucaramanga-cucuta-85982.

to leave their waste? To bathe in those clean waters? Bathing!
Scrubbing! We are going to enforce a law here to ban those people.
That is a disrespect for Nature and those places we respect a lot.
Nobody goes there and they do come with their dirt...¹¹⁰

During fieldwork conducted for this thesis in Santurbán, *paramuno* peasants were eager to share their views but were afraid to sign consent forms and even, in fact, some refused. This made it impossible to proceed with those interviews. The reason provided for this was that, years earlier, state agencies used documents that they had previously asked peasants to sign to facilitate the development of laws that ran against peasant interests. These laws – recently repealed – restricted peasants from environmentally managing their own territory, and even banned them from living and cropping on their lands. These laws around Santurbán followed years of environmental activism, coming specifically from Bucaramanga City, and were mostly related to potential water contamination by large-scale mining. This created a tension among a triangle of actors that is evidenced in the opening quote: on one side the Santurbán peasantries, on another the powerful mining investors and the government and on the third, the city water users organised against *páramo* mining. Foreign investment in gold mega-mining has been the major destabilising factor for Santurbán peasants in the neoliberal era.

Historically, there have been various competing interests exploring the potential exploitation of the Santurbán *páramo*'s resources. Following the English-owned Colombian Mining Association's acquisition of mining concessions in Santurbán in 1820, several foreign companies participated in a neo-colonial search for gold over the next century, with poor results.¹¹¹ In the 1990s, however, FTA negotiations changed that record, allowing powerful international investors to expand into the region and exploit its resources on a massive scale. In response, the city's environmentalists formed an early urban 'light-ecologist' defence through self-identifying as 'water-owners'.¹¹² Tensions

¹¹⁰ *Memories of Participant No.87*.

¹¹¹ Gustavo Pinzón González, *Historia de la formación de Santander, sus provincias y municipios*, 1. ed (Bucaramanga: Sic Editorial, 2007); Frank Safford, "Foreign and National Enterprise in Nineteenth-Century Colombia," *Business History Review* 39, no. 4 (1965): 503–26; Sarmiento Pinzón and Ungar, *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo*, 2014.

¹¹² The 'light-ecologism', or 'ecologism of the rich', 'or half-environmentalism', are popular names that Mesa Cuadros uses to explain eco-capitalism, as an environmental activism coming from privileged places where just the Nature half of the system is important, but the inhabitants are ignored, or considered damaging, so they should be removed from their territory. Gregorio

between these two groups were mediated by state agencies called ‘Regional Autonomous Corporations’, the environmental authorities in each departmental jurisdiction since 1993: the *Corporación Autónoma Regional para la Defensa de la Meseta de Bucaramanga* CDMB (Regional Autonomous Corporation for the Defence of the Bucaramanga Plateau) in Santander, and the *Corporación Autónoma Regional de la Frontera Nor-Oriental* CORPONOR (Regional Autonomous Corporation of the North-Eastern Border) in Northern Santander.¹¹³

Colombia only started to recognise the ecological importance of its *páramos* – its main source of drinkable water – in the 1980s, thanks to research carried out by such scholars as Ernesto Guhl and Tomás van der Hamen.¹¹⁴ It was only with the Law 99 of 1993, however, that the first official conservation efforts began. Notably, this was also the first time that *páramos* were mentioned in Colombian law.¹¹⁵

It is incorrect to assume that these were the first conservationist efforts, though. Peasants had already established their own care actions generations ago, given that for these indigenous-descendant peoples the *páramo* was both home and ‘sacred’ place, as this participant explained:

We love this *páramo* very much and we were the first water caregivers... God and Nature spoiled us... crops depend on water... You [just] take the water you need, and let it flow, down to the riverbed, there another one takes some, and another, and another and so on... [Water] is abundant and has not diminished despite the fact there are more people now and more crops. We have no struggle for water... no-one blocks it, no-one abuses it, and we all use it.¹¹⁶

As the quote suggests, *paramuno* peasants have been informally managing their watering resources as it is their tradition. Due to the El Niño–

Mesa Cuadros, *Ambientalismo Popular*, Colección Primeros Pasos (Bogotá: Ediciones desde abajo, 2018).

¹¹³ These corporations were created with different purposes but were made environmental authorities by Law 99 of 1993 and ended up being the main interlocutors with peasantries during the initial attempts to delimit the Santurbán páramo. Congress of Colombia, “Law 99/1993,” *Diario Oficial*. Año CXXIX. N. 41146 § (1993); Rueda, “CDMB recuerda sus 49 años de historia ‘frenando’ a la erosión”; Presidencia de la República de Colombia, “Decreto 3450/1983,” *Pub. L. No. 3450, 36441 Diario Oficial Año CXX 152* (1984).

¹¹⁴ Guhl Nimtz, *Los páramos circundantes de la Sabana de Bogotá*; Congress of Colombia, Law 99/1993.

¹¹⁵ Congress of Colombia, Law 99/1993.

¹¹⁶ *Memories of Participant No.87*.

Southern Oscillation (ENSO), many formal and informal mini-irrigation districts were built in rural Colombia in the 1990s.¹¹⁷ Various peasant communities in Santurbán organised their own artisan irrigation systems working with hosepipes and gravity, and sometimes with rudimentary motor pumps, but always sharing the water as a common resource, both for agriculture and occasional fishing.¹¹⁸ Peasantries in Santurbán were also traditionally involved in *guaquería* (treasure hunting) and artisanal mining of alluvial gold thanks to the abundant rivers and deposits, activities that only inappreciably disrupted local ecologies – if at all.¹¹⁹

The transition from small artisanal gold mining to megaprojects was facilitated by mining legislation which favoured transnational companies.¹²⁰ Although sometimes presented as such, this was not a conservationist measure to inhibit water pollutant artisanal mining but a decision based on macro-economic benefits that could be perceived. Mega-mining could potentially pollute at larger scales but could pay royalties to the government while informal artisan miners did not. Analogous to the 1990s counter-reforms of agricultural policies, mining policies were adjusted in such a way that small miners were effectively excluded, having no means to meet the new regulation requirements. Simultaneously, the government acceded to foreign investments, facilitating gold exploitation on a large scale. The artisanal mines legalisation programme promoted by the Law 141 of 1994, as lobbied for by some big companies, allowed informal miners to acquire titles that were quickly integrated into large projects such as Greystar's Eco-oro in Santurbán.¹²¹ Small peasant miners, affected by rural conflict-related violence, land and mining titles speculation, and old age, among other factors, sold not just their titles but also their lands.¹²²

¹¹⁷ *Memories of Participant No.76*.

¹¹⁸ As evidenced by the testimony and the peasants' private photos during the construction, and confirmed in landscape observations during fieldwork. See *Memories of Participant No.76*.

¹¹⁹ Alberto Amaya and Carlos Barriga, *Santurbán, lo que la tierra no perdona*, 2015 (Santander, Colombia: Universidad nacional de Colombia, Vicerectoría de Investigación, Escuela de Cine y Televisión, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBkTKCM-TQk>.

¹²⁰ Gloria Lopera Mesa, "La parte alta del cerro es para los pequeños mineros'. Sobre La vigencia del régimen minero especial para Marmato y su influencia en la construcción de territorialidad ('The Top of the Hill Is for Small Miners'. On the Validity of the Special Regime for Marmato Mining and Its Influence on the Construction of Territoriality)," *Revista Derecho Del Estado* 35 (2015): 124.

¹²¹ Lopera Mesa, "The Top of the Hill Is for Small Miners."

¹²² See the documentary Amaya and Barriga, *Santurbán, lo que la tierra no perdona*, 2015.

In this context, in 1994 Greystar was granted rights to explore and exploit the Angostura gold deposit in Santurbán. They added various titles over the years, finally consolidating in 2007 the Eco-oro concession covering about thirty thousand hectares and more than 360 kilometres of drilling.¹²³ Although it is hard to say how many of these titles fell in the *páramo* – since the delimitation was not clear and is not even today – both NGOs and Greystar recognised in 2012 that at least half of it could be inside of what today is considered *páramo*.¹²⁴ This was possible because the 2001 Mining Code had no explicit restriction on mining within Andean moorlands or peatlands; such restrictions were only introduced in 2010. Thus, over about two decades of scientific conservationist pro-*páramo* campaigns (1980s-90s), extreme weather conditions were reducing these ecosystems, environmental legislation advanced very slowly, and mining concessions accumulated a lot faster.

The importance of Andean moorlands and high peatland ecosystems was unclear then, and still today is a heated debate: what are *páramos*? How connected or dependant are they from other surrounding ecosystems? How do they interact with agroecosystems? To answer these questions, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute on Biological Resource Research (IAvH) in 2007 published the atlas of Colombian *páramos* in an effort to explain their ecosystemic complexity.¹²⁵ For their study of Santurbán they took areas 9.8 thousand feet above sea level and higher in the region and categorised them by biomes and ecosystems; figure 16 shows a highly simplified version of their information. As shown, agricultural landscapes were incorporated and the *paramisation* (turning of lands to *páramo*) of abandoned agroecosystems was recognised. The atlas also showed human interventions in approximately fourteen per cent of the area.

¹²³ Mark Moseley-Williams and Eco-Oro, “Notificación de intención para someter una reclamación a arbitraje conforme el Tratado de Libre Comercio entre Colombia y Canadá,” Notificación de controversia dirigida al Presidente de la República de Colombia, March 7, 2016, International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes - World Bank Group, icsid.worldbank.org,

http://icsidfiles.worldbank.org/icsid/ICSIDBLOBS/OnlineAwards/C6086/DS10829_En.pdf.

¹²⁴ Moseley-Williams and Eco-Oro; ABColombia, “Giving It Away: The Consequences of an Unsustainable Mining Policy in Colombia” (ABColombia: CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB, SCIAF, Trócaire, 2012), https://www.abcolombia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Giving_it_Away_mining_report_ABColombia-2012-ENG.pdf.

¹²⁵ Morales Rivas et al., *Atlas de páramos de Colombia*.

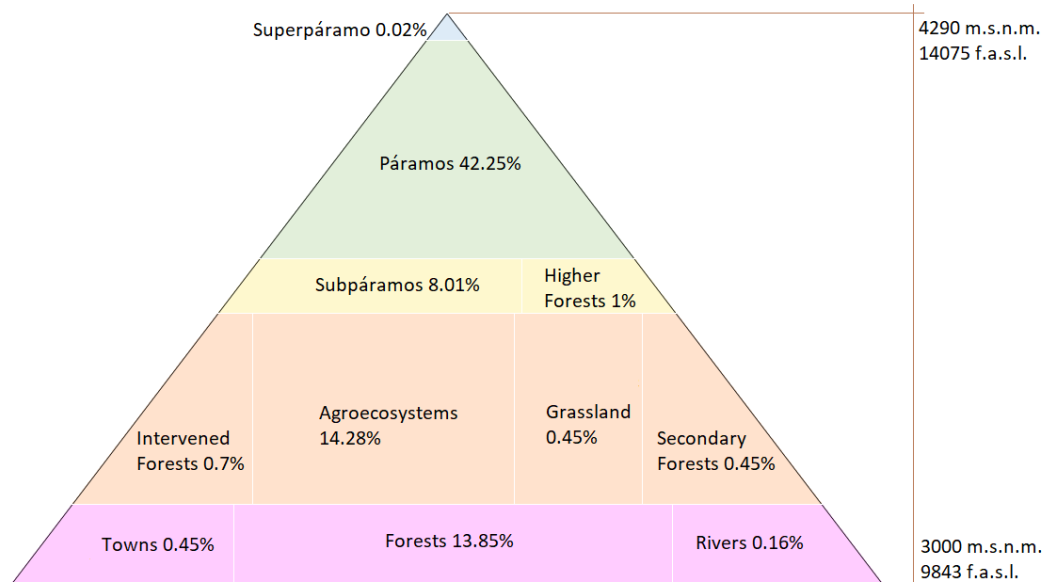


Figure 16. Simplified version of the Ecosystems of the Santurbán Jurisdiction complex. This was designed to represent the table presented by the IAvH in the atlas of Colombian páramos in 2007. Please notice that sizes do not represent percentages. Author's elaboration.¹²⁶

This figure shows that the Santurbán *páramo* complex encompasses different interrelated ecosystems. About fifty per cent of the area corresponds to various categories of the *páramo*, *subpáramo* or *superpáramo* types of ecosystems, but the rest also contains towns, peasant settlements, forests, grasslands and agroecosystems. Although the Colombian public has a dominant perception of a pristine *páramo* with no humans, research demonstrates that this is a misconception and Santurbán is a socio-ecosystem. However, when this atlas (2007) was launched Colombian scientists were still studying key research questions to feed the *páramos'* debate. The government, meanwhile, was eager to obtain mega-mining royalties and so started the FTA negotiations, fast-tracking gold mining authorisations.¹²⁷

In contrast with conflicts in Los Montes de María where the oil palm elites and state dispositif acted in coalition with the lower-land *acuatendientes*, in Santurbán the multinationals and the government were in confrontation with urban lowlands water users of Santurbán rivers' waters and who paid for the service – if not for its upkeep – and felt called to defend it. These two factions – government plus global gold mining companies on one side, and urban water

¹²⁶ Morales Rivas et al., 41.

¹²⁷ Sebastián Rubiano Galvis, "Regulación ambiental y minería en Colombia: comentarios al proyecto de ley de reforma de minas" (FNA, 2012), Bibliothek der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kolumbien/09382.pdf>.

users on the other – brought a legal battle often simplified as 'gold vs water'. This confrontation added pressure to *paramuno* peasantries, who were objectified but not listened to by either side. The Colombian government's favouring of companies like Greystar was evidenced in the regulations' reigning narrative of 'legal security', 'legitimate trust' and 'acquired exploitation rights'.¹²⁸ In the case of Santurbán, until 2013 there was still no defined land boundary delimited, and multinationals could acquire rights there rampantly, even within the most fragile *páramo* ecosystems.¹²⁹

A sudden turn of events occurred in 2011 when the National Development Plan 2010-2014 banned not just mining, but also agriculture from 'delimited' *páramos* such as the Santurbán complex once the delimitation process had reached a conclusion.¹³⁰ This Plan was arguably a critical milestone in the depeasantisation of Santurbán, since the conservationist efforts formulated by the government were radically based on wiping the land of humans, by law. By acknowledging that these areas were highly exploited but simultaneously declaring any human activity illegal, the legislation made *paramuno* peasantries essentially illegal, with no prior consultation or socialisation. Notice that this normative was developed based on outdated ideas of *páramo* corresponding to misconceptions from the 1980s, whilst the most recent concepts developed by the scientific experts, as the elucidations reproduced in the 2007 Atlas by the IAvH, were not taken into consideration. This developmental action demonstrates the ongoing colonial legacies of racial and class discrimination: it completely denied the importance of peasant/human inhabitants in the *páramo* conservation and decreed the (previously unthinkable to peasant minds) impossible division of this socio-Nature unit already acknowledged by the Colombian scientific community. To make it worse, at the same time, this plan was good news for gold mining companies. It meant that in territories above the delimiting line, their extractive megaprojects which neighboured *páramos* could gain approval. This legal concession had,

¹²⁸ Corte Constitucional, "Sentencia C-983/10: Legalización de Concesiones de Explotación Minera Tradicional -Finalidad Constitucional," Expediente D-8171 Sentencia de la Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia § (2010).

¹²⁹ Sarmiento Pinzón and Ungar, *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo*, 2014; Rubiano Galvis, "Regulación ambiental y minería en Colombia: comentarios al proyecto de ley de reforma de minas."

¹³⁰ DPN (National Planning Department), *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2014: Prosperidad para todos*, vol. 2 (Bogotá, Colombia: Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 2011), 989.

therefore, two main implications for Santurbán: it forcibly displaced peasants, while also articulating the forthcoming regulation with the international market and capitals eager to exploit the *El Dorado* that lied beneath its lagoons and *frailejones*, in spite of conservationist efforts.

In the meantime, to protect Santurbán's moorlands and peatlands – from both mining companies and peasants – the Regional Autonomous Corporations as local environmental authorities appealed to already shielded figures as Natural Parks, and created officially protected areas covering the areas they wanted for conservation.¹³¹ In 2007 they created the 'District for Integrated Management of the natural resources of the Berlín moorland' (DMI-Berlín). Various peasantries were confined within this area, mainly those settled in the agricultural zone formed by territories in the southeast such as the Berlín settlement in Tona, where the *junca* onion proliferated, and Silos and Mutiscua, formerly wheat growers but by then mainly potato and fruit growers.¹³² Subsequently, they created the National Park Sisavita in the northern border of Santurbán and, five years later, the National Park Santurbán on the north of the mining district in 2013. The cluster formed by these new parks and the DMI-Berlín was called the Santurbán-Berlín *páramo* cluster CSJB.¹³³

This strategy was an immediate obstacle for mining companies in the northwest part of Santurbán where they already held exploration projects, prompting the withdrawal of Greystar's Eco-oro project. By 2013, although foreign companies started to desist from gold exploitation in Santurbán, they kept mining titles to sell on international stock markets. With companies like Greystar being listed or headquartered in UK and Ireland, these governments obtained benefits from activities which were causing environmental conflicts and human rights violations in Colombia. Even after it was retired, the Eco-oro company used an FTA to legally sue Colombia on the grounds that state conservation policies inhibited their project and therefore, their expected profits. This evidences how compromised Santurbán had been by neo-colonial powers

¹³¹ Yesid Lancheros, "Santurbán, reserva en peligro," *El Tiempo*, July 30, 2004, El Tiempo OL.

¹³² Sarmiento Pinzón and Ungar, *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo*, 2014; Jorge Humberto Restrepo Toro, "Plan integral de manejo del distrito de manejo integrado de los recursos naturales 'Páramo de Berlín'" (Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia: Corponor, August 2008), 9, Corporación Autónoma Regional de la Frontera Nororiental Corponor, corponor.gov.co.

¹³³ Sarmiento Pinzón and Ungar, *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo*, 2014.

in the neoliberal era.¹³⁴ This was paradoxically facilitated by the CSJB's creation. The fear of expropriation increased negative economic impacts on *paramuno* peasantries and the territory, since the value of their lands dropped precipitously, generating an uneven competition between the regional Autonomous Corporations and international companies for the acquisition of those lands. In that contest, foreign gold investors held the capitalist advantage; they were offering four times the price that their environmental competitors could.¹³⁵ Trading mining titles became an informal business, operating between approximately 2004 and 2011 almost as a black market economy, managing bureaucratic roundabout schemes, getting permits in national parks and displacing peasants.¹³⁶ "Not selling was a form of resistance", recalls a peasant woman, "not selling our lands or our mines".¹³⁷ The Regional Autonomous Corporations estimated, using DANE's data, that within rural areas of the parks and the DMI-Berlín about 1,500 families remained in 2012.¹³⁸ They resisted, and still do.

In 2009, environmental organisation in the city took form. The *Comité por la Defensa del Agua y del Páramo de Santurbán* (Committee for the Defence of the Water and the Santurbán *Páramo*; 'the Water Defence Committee' hereafter) was created to "protect Bucaramanga's water". It can be asserted based on the Water Defence Committee's public discourses that they successfully empowered the urban dwellers by ownership and appropriation of water: they effectively turned the 'water drunk by Bucaramanga's people' into 'the water owned by Bucaramanga's people':

¹³⁴ Comité por la Defensa del Agua y el Paramo de Santurbán to Mrs. Meg Taylor, Vice-president Compliance Advisor / Ombudsman (CAO), "Complaint Presented to the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO) - Re: International Financial Corporation Project No. 27961 in Colombia," June 13, 2012, Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO); Moseley-Williams and Eco-Oro, "Notificación de Intención," March 7, 2016; ABColombia, "Giving It Away: The Consequences of an Unsustainable Mining Policy in Colombia."

¹³⁵ Amaya and Barriga, *Santurbán, lo que la tierra no perdona*, 2015.

¹³⁶ El Tiempo, "Así opera el tráfico de permisos mineros," *El Tiempo*, June 5, 2011, El Tiempo.

¹³⁷ Amaya and Barriga, *Santurbán, lo que la tierra no perdona*, 2015.

¹³⁸ Carlos Enrique Sarmiento Pinzón and Paula Ungar, eds., *Aportes a la delimitación del páramo mediante la identificación de los límites inferiores del ecosistema a escala 1:25.000 y análisis del sistema social asociado al territorio: Complejo de páramos Jurisdicciones – Santurbán – Berlín departamentos de Santander y Norte de Santander* (Bogotá, Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2014).

“... the *Bumangueses*' water is at stake”¹³⁹

Under the motto 'We defend the water of Bucaramanga', city merchants, the Santanderean Society of Engineers, the Santo Tomás University, the Society of Public Improvements of Bucaramanga and the Committee for the Defence of Water and the Santurbán *páramo*, are organising a great march through the streets of the Santander capital to protest against mining in the Santurbán *páramo*.¹⁴⁰

With signs that read 'Defend Bucaramanga's Water', about 30,000 *Bumangueses* came out to protest last Friday against the project of the Canadian company GreyStar that seeks to extract gold from the Santurbán *páramo*.¹⁴¹

The undeniable right of this organisation and other local interested parties to demand clean drinkable water is undisputable. However, the exclusion of territories' inhabitants as the arguable rightful holders of its natural resources was highly problematic, and socially and environmentally unjust.¹⁴² The implication of the Water Defence Committee's line of patriarchal and colonial thought was to deny *paramuno* peasants' capacity and agency in the management of their own environment and key ecosystems. This mentality called for the creation of 'parks without peoples', similar to Yellowstone and Yosemite in the US, and others in Latin America, destined for activities such as eco-tourism and in which only paying customers would be able to enjoy the ecosystem services provided.¹⁴³ Analogously, regarding Santurbán rivers, under this logic only those who could pay for water would have legal rights over it. This situation is similar to the conflict in Playón and Matuya reservoirs in Los Montes de María; the industrial rice and oil palm plantations there pay for the

¹³⁹ *Bumangueses* meaning people from Bucaramanga. Elizabeth Reyes Le Paliscot, “La esperanza de Santurbán,” *www.vanguardia.com*, May 2, 2010, sec. Otros deportes, para. 3, vanguardia.com/deportes/otros-deportes/la-esperanza-de-santurban-XYVL60808.

¹⁴⁰ El Espectador, “Santandereanos marchan contra minería en Santurbán,” *El Espectador*, February 21, 2011, sec. Actualidad, para. 1, elespectador.com/noticias/actualidad/santandereanos-marchan-contra-mineria-en-santurban/.

¹⁴¹ Semana, “Bucaramanga se paraliza por proyecto minero en Páramo de Santurbán,” *Semana.com Últimas Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo*, February 26, 2011, para. 1, semana.com/nacion/articulo/bucaramanga-paraliza-proyecto-minero-paramo-santurban/236176-3/.

¹⁴² María Solanilla et al., “Vida digna, justicia ambiental y social: el debate alrededor de los páramos,” *Semillas*, January 12, 2021; José Luis Díaz Ramos et al., “Agricultura En Páramos: Entre La Conservación y Los Derechos de Las Comunidades” (FNA, 2020), Bibliothek der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kolumbien/16131.pdf>.

¹⁴³ Stephan Amend and Thora Amend, eds., *National Parks without People? The South American Experience*, Parques Nacionales y Conservación Ambiental 5 (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN - the World Conservation Union, 1995).

water while the *Alta Montaña* peasants do not, therefore according to capitalist logics the latter should not enjoy the same privileges of use. The name *acuatenientes* was coined by *Montemariano* peasants to refer to these high-water consumption payers and users. Mesa-Cuadros calls this ‘eco-capitalism’, a term originally coined by economists, to signify the use of consumerism to resolve the environmental problems it contributed to create but “with little disruption to daily life”.¹⁴⁴ In Colombia, as pointed out by Cajigas-Rotundo, this reinforced the “power asymmetries between centres and peripheries of the modern/colonial” – between city-users and rurality-providers.¹⁴⁵ In the case of Santurbán, the peasantries’ situation was aggravated by the acknowledged fact that their activities, such as small mining and the use of Green Revolution agrarian techniques, have had a negative environmental impact. Dragged along by ‘developmentalist’ yield targets, and in order to ‘properly exploit’ the land, peasants ended up being agents of maldevelopment in the *páramo*.

The Water Defence Committee was instigated by union leaders of the Metropolitan Aqueduct of Bucaramanga, the directives of the Santander section of the National Federation of Merchants FENALCO, and the Faculty of Environmental Chemistry of the Santo Tomás University, in 2009. They not only organised several massive marches in Bucaramanga but also presented international claims, drawing attention to the wrongdoings of Eco-Oro and other mining multinationals, becoming highly influential at national level.¹⁴⁶ Local workers, students and opposition political parties – all from the city – joined them around the development of their environmental political agenda to defend “what belongs to them”, the “whole unit *páramo* starting on the top of the mountains and finishing in Bucaramanga”, the “natural water factory that supplies their city”.¹⁴⁷ These are examples of the ideas formulated from

¹⁴⁴ Mesa Cuadros, *Ambientalismo Popular*; Robert Guttman, “Moving Toward an Ecologically Oriented Capitalism (‘Eco-Capitalism’),” in *Eco-Capitalism*, by Robert Guttman (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 35–64; Hartmut Berghoff and Adam Rome, eds., “Chapter 2. Shades of Green: A Business- History Perspective on Eco- Capitalism,” in *Green Capitalism?* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 13–32.

¹⁴⁵ Heather Rogers, *Green Gone Wrong: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Eco-Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2014), 4; Juan Camilo Cajigas-Rotundo, “Anotaciones sobre la biocolonialidad del poder,” *Pensamiento Jurídico*, no. 18 (January 1, 2007): 59.

¹⁴⁶ Comité por la Defensa del Agua y el Paramo de Santurbán to Mrs. Meg Taylor, Vice-president Compliance Advisor / Ombudsman (CAO), “Complaint Presented to the Office of the Compliance Advisor/Ombudsman (CAO),” June 13, 2012; ABColombia, “Giving It Away: The Consequences of an Unsustainable Mining Policy in Colombia.”

¹⁴⁷ Interviews conducted among the Water Defence Committee leaders and members by Acosta Rodríguez: Diego Fernando Acosta Rodríguez, “Subjetivación política en el comité para la

Bucaramanga City – even from within academia – regarding the *paramuno* peasants:

“What must be done is to reconvert agricultural production. They must manage it with environmentally viable technologies... And leave people there, but commit them to take care of the *páramo*... if we set clear rules for their growth, people can stay”¹⁴⁸

The implications of the above quote by Professor Avellaneda regarding the *paramuno* peasants evidences the terms of Santurbán ownership conceived by the Water Defence Committee. “What must be done”, for instance, sets up this quote as an unquestionable moral imperative, a necessary imposition upon peasantries and their territories. “Reconvert agricultural production” to the urban perspective of “environmentally viable technologies”, considering that these people might share a misrepresented image of a pristine *páramo* was also problematic. It was the conversion to new technologies in the Green Revolution which primarily fuelled the rural *paramo*’s maldevelopment in the first place. Sustainable agriculture and organic farming had been already tried through Santurbán peasants’ own initiatives, mostly using agroecology. Without the means to invest or having a market willing to pay their value, those *páramo* organic production projects had failed, unable to compete with industrial high-yield agriculture which cheapens crops through large scale production.¹⁴⁹ The Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) has been suggested as a market-based alternative solution to fund the permanence of *paramuno* inhabitants in the territory and value their caregiving activities. The PES were apparently discussed internally in the Water Defence Committee and rejected. If the urban dwellers’ viewpoint could be interpreted from their discussions, it could be affirmed that even though they feel ownership over the Santurbán *páramo*, they might be reluctant to pay for its conservation.¹⁵⁰ Following Professor

defensa del agua y del páramo de Santurbán” (Psychology BSc, Bogotá, Colombia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Sede Bogotá, 2018), 34, 40, 39, humanas.unal.edu.co (Facultad de Ciencias Humanas).

¹⁴⁸ Amaya and Barriga, *Santurbán, lo que la tierra no perdona*, 2015, pt. Min. 40:30.

¹⁴⁹ Marco A. Rodríguez Peña, “La cebolla junca ahora se hace polvo,” *www.vanguardia.com*, February 8, 2009, sec. Judicial, vanguardia.com/judicial/la-cebolla-junca-ahora-se-hace-polvo-BDVL20355; María Paulina Baena Jaramillo, “¿Cómo abrirles paso a los negocios verdes en el páramo?,” *El Espectador*, November 3, 2016, sec. Ambiente; *Memories of Participant No.89*.

¹⁵⁰ Several studies and surveys confirm this negative. See for example: Luis Alfonso Cárdenas Mateus, “¿Pagaría un excedente en su factura de servicios públicos para conservar los bosques?,” *www.vanguardia.com*, October 3, 2012, sec. Área Metropolitana, Bucaramanga, vanguardia.com/area-metropolitana/bucaramanga/pagaria-un-excedente-en-su-factura-de-

Avellaneda's words, instead of compensating peasants through PES or the value of their organic production, the users feel misguidedly that they had the power to give peasants permission to stay in the territory in exchange for their committing to care and not growing in population. In other words, suggesting not only to coerce peasants to refrain the settlement from extending geographically, but also literally imposing birth control and family planning.

Therefore, a critical interrogation of the Water Defence Committee's discourse, in general, reveals that its environmental activism has created a tension with local peasant communities by uncompromisingly attempting to repress their 'otherness'. This is based on such misconceptions as seeing the *páramo* merely as a 'water-factory' at the city's service, claiming ownership of the water and territory of others, believing that the *páramo* protection does not include peasants, seeing peasants as enemies allied with the mining companies, or not measuring the risk on depriving the territory of its main caretakers.

The concept of territorial integrality, which highlights the *páramo* ecosystems' connectedness, has been also misused by the Water Defence Committee.¹⁵¹ It has been cited to build a politico-ecological misrepresented image where the *páramo* extends from the top, where what they consider the 'water-fabric' is, to the city borders, where the 'clients' are. Erwing Rodríguez-Salah, Water Defence Committee founder and leader of a Santander business elites' group, in 2012 championed the idea that the rivers should be defended until the stream reaches the cities' aqueduct intakes. "Nothing above the aqueduct intakes" was his motto.¹⁵² This statement is yet another example of

servicios-publicos-para-conservar-los-bosques-FDVL177121; MADS, "El objetivo de la mesa de trabajo del páramo de Santurbán será mejorar la calidad de vida de los pobladores de la zona," *Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible* (blog), de diciembre de 2013, minambiente.gov.co/index.php/component/content/article?id=974:el-uso-sostenible-de-los-bosques-prioridad-de-minambiente-313; Portafolio, "Empresas pagarán para proteger el páramo de Santurbán," *Portafolio*, Enero De - 03:00 A. M 2014, sec. Finanzas | Economía, portafolio.co/economia/finanzas/empresas-pagaran-protger-paramo-santurban-51764.

¹⁵¹ On the territorial integrity and interconnectedness see: Tatiana Roa Avendaño and Danilo Urrea, "El Agua y La Mina: El Movimiento Por El Agua y La Exacerbación de Los Conflictos Mineros En Colombia," *Revista Semillas* 42–43 (n.d.): 32–37.

¹⁵² Quotation taken from Acosta-Rodríguez' interview with Rodríguez-Salah which can be contrasted with the leader's writings on his blogs around the time (2012-2014). See: Erwing Rodríguez-Salah, Entrevista 4, interview by Diego Fernando Acosta Rodríguez, Transcript, 2017, Thesis "Subjetivación política en el Comité para la defensa del agua y del Páramo de Santurbán" (Acosta Rodríguez, 2018); Erwing Rodríguez-Salah, "Un gran engaño ambiental: la 'delimitación' de Santurbán," *Movimiento Cívico Conciencia Ciudadana* (blog), December 11, 2014, <http://concienciaciudadana.org/un-gran-engano-ambiental-la-delimitacion-de-santurban/>;

the utilitarian and city-centred eco-capitalist view. In contrast, peasants' understanding of *páramo* boundaries seemed to be radically different.

According to the peasants, the 'pure *páramo*' is placed 'far higher than them' and can be easily identified by the extremely cold temperatures.¹⁵³ Although peasants recognise themselves as *paramuno* or *paramero* peasants, as 'peasants who live within the *páramo*', on their own territorial knowledge they visualise the whole region as an array of different zones. In their language, the *páramo* and *superpáramo* ecosystems are known as the '*puro páramo*' (the 'pure' moorland); no-one can live and nothing can be cropped there, approximately at 10,500-11,000 feet above the sea level.¹⁵⁴ For them, as indigenous-descendant communities, special orally-maintained customary behavioural norms must be observed there: *frailejones* and lagoons must not be touched and the lagoons, in particular, could get 'angry' if people shout around them.¹⁵⁵ In general, peasants avoid stepping on moor and peatlands as much as possible, so usually years pass without them visiting the 'pure' *páramo*. "Nothing above the aqueduct intakes" or taking the *páramo* delimitation to reach the city border, in contrast with the ecosystemic view of the scientist and also with the 'areas array' understood by peasants, does not just differ by about seven thousand feet and more than twenty degrees temperature, but also proposes a type of uniformity that neglects different types of needs and protection levels that different zones might require, particularly those that peasant societies inhabit.

Regarding to the exclusion of peasantries from the Water Defence Committee, this chapter argues that it is contradictory to defend a rural area that 'should end in the aqueduct intakes' but does not include its inhabitants. The Water Defence Committee maintains the premise that the *páramo* is a water-provider at the city's service – an anthropocentric view consistent with an idea of a Nature which does not include humans. In the words of another Water Defence Committee member:

Erwing Rodríguez-Salah, "La estrategia del gobierno para Santurbán: redelimitar lo ya delimitado," *Razón Pública* (blog), December 1, 2014, razonpublica.com/la-estrategia-del-gobierno-para-santurban-redelimitar-lo-ya-delimitado/; Erwing Rodríguez-Salah, "Un extraño híbrido: ¿un parque minero en Santurbán?," *Razón Pública* (blog), December 10, 2012, razonpublica.com/un-extrano-hibrido-iun-parque-minero-en-santurban/.

¹⁵³ *Memories of Participant No.87*.

¹⁵⁴ *Memories of Participant No.86*.

¹⁵⁵ From fieldwork notes.

It has been suggested that this movement could carry the weight of other movements. As if the Committee for the Defence of Water and the Santurbán *Páramo* could be constituted as a kind of federation where the problems of the peasants [and others] could converge... And, from the beginning there was a very clear separation, which is also a political definition, a clear separation of the water defence with respect to the Santurbán *páramo*... Others might defend the land, and in this way, they critique mining, others defend rural work ... The peasants, then, [should] make their own platform, but we cannot [be it].¹⁵⁶

This testimony reveals a lack of awareness about peasants' cultures and agriculture, as well as of their territorial claims, which involve water as much as land. In that sense, peasants could actually be the Water Defence Committee's best allies in water defence against large-scale mining investor forces and greedy governments. As Mesa-Cuadros warns once peasants or indigenous communities were expelled from their territories, Nature would be compromised since there would be no stakeholders from whom to take prior consultations or consent.¹⁵⁷ The territory would be more exposed.

The regulatory enactments here mentioned nevertheless completely ignored peasants, with the rare exception of the DMI's. This legal and political exclusion was only corrected by the Constitutional Court in 2017.¹⁵⁸ Since 2011, Santurbán peasants have organised and struggled together to survive extreme weather changes which have caused frost, fires and destruction, and fought to remain financially afloat within unjust market conditions. Meanwhile, they found in both state and environmental movements antagonistic actions instead of support. These tensions, the legal apparatus, and the various eco-capitalist pressures upon them caused displacement and undermined both food sovereignty and basic human rights.

This fragment of a letter written by a peasant woman, leader and *junca* onion grower from Berlín, addressed to the CDMB, is representative of *paramuno* peasant resistance and dignity:

¹⁵⁶ Anonymous Committee Member, Entrevista 2, interview by Diego Fernando Acosta Rodríguez, Transcript, 2017, Thesis "Subjetivación política en el Comité para la defensa del agua y del Páramo de Santurbán" (Acosta Rodríguez, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ Dr Mesa Cuadros is a researcher on Collective and Environmental Rights. Mesa Cuadros, *Ambientalismo Popular*.

¹⁵⁸ Corte Constitucional, "Sentencia T-361/17: Derecho de Participación En Materia Ambiental En El Marco de La Expedición de Resolución Que Delimitó Páramo de Santurbán," Expediente T-5.315.942 Sentencia de la Corte Constitucional de la República de Colombia § (2017).

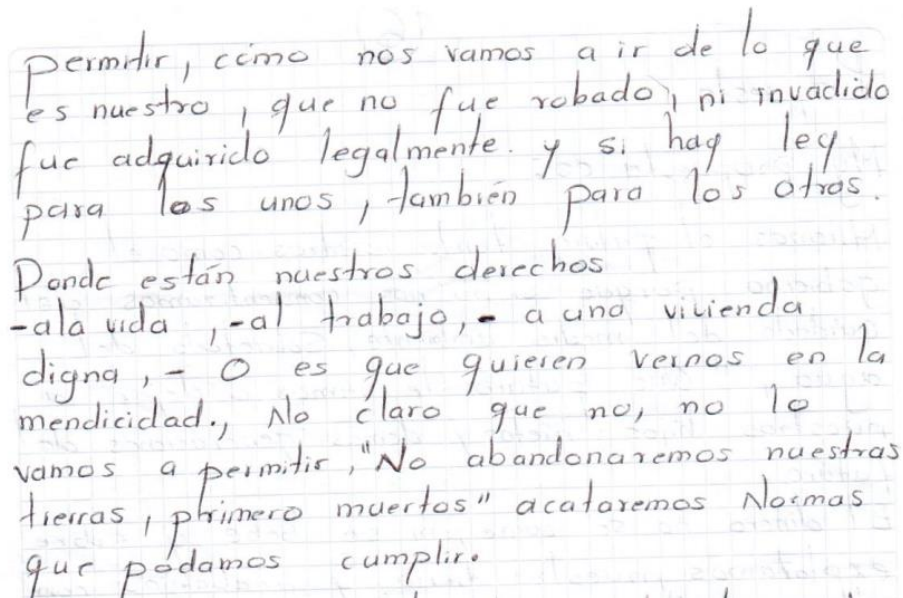
A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in Spanish and discusses land rights and the well-being of peasants. The handwriting is in black ink and is somewhat cursive. The paper has horizontal lines and a vertical margin line on the left side. The text is written in two paragraphs. The first paragraph asks how to leave land that is not stolen or invaded, but acquired legally, and notes that if there is law for some, there should be for others. The second paragraph lists rights: to life, work, and dignity, and asks if the goal is to see peasants as beggars. It concludes with a statement of defiance: 'We will not leave our lands; we would die first.' and a promise to obey laws that are reasonable.

Image 15. Handwritten letter from a peasant woman to the CDMB

It reads:

How could we leave what is ours, it was not robbed, it was not invaded, was acquired legally. If there is law (rights) for some individuals, there is law for others. Where are our rights? – to live, to work, to dignity – or is it that you want to see us as beggars? We will not allow that, no. “We will not leave our lands; we would die first.” We will obey the law that we are able to obey.¹⁵⁹

To close, it is important to mention that in 2013, the IAvH adopted an improved and more peasantry-inclusive vision of the Santurbán *páramo*, amending the old narrative of 'anthropic intervention'. Instead, the *páramo* was redefined and accepted as a dynamic socio-ecosystem where Nature and humans co-evolved for centuries.¹⁶⁰ However, this recognition has had a limited impact in the Colombian collective *páramo* image, which has been highly influenced by the Water Defence Committee and their political allies in Santander and Northern Santander.

¹⁵⁹ Silvia Salazar de Agua Clara, “Propuesta,” 2019, [santurban.minambiente.gov.co/Propuestas/Tona/Propuesta 5](http://santurban.minambiente.gov.co/Propuestas/Tona/Propuesta_5), MADS.

¹⁶⁰ Jimena Cortés-Duque and Carlos Enrique Sarmiento Pinzón, eds., *Visión socioecosistémica de los páramos y la alta montaña colombiana: memorias del proceso de definición de criterios para la delimitación de páramos*, Primera edición, Contribución Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, no. 488 (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt, 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter has primarily argued that the depeasantisation and disruption of food sovereignty between 1990 and 2013 was associated with the organised capitalist absorption of peasant lands, waters and other natural resources into money-making businesses which harnessed intersecting structural and physical forms of violence. It has also discussed how, after the neoliberal turn, this one-sided competition for the Natural treasures in the peasant territories involved civil society in anti-peasant discourses associated with biased conservationism and profit maximisation over resource exploitation.

This chapter has advanced this thesis' argument that depeasantisation is a consequence of counter-reformist forces that exceed the resilience of communities and individuals. By the end of the twentieth century, this process was linked to multiple stressors – primarily armed conflict, weather variability and impacts of global markets – that simultaneously impacted upon peasants from different directions, generating synergies and intensifying their effects in the process. Depeasantisation achieved such cultural devastation that some peasants were disconnected from their communities as individuals, and they surrendered their autonomy, food sufficiency, food traditions, and agricultural and commoning practices. This was the case for some Camarón peasants in Los Montes de María, who ceded to market pressure and abandoned food production for oil palm monoculture by joining contract farming. Depeasantisation is here shown by their agricultural practices becoming less 'peasant-like' in two forms. First, by no longer using peasant practices but those incorporated from agroindustries, developed by others with no specific knowledge of the territories; and secondly, by changing a peasant economy based on food production and autonomous decisions for contract farming models or similar, where production has been dictated by the global market resulting in dense monocrops of tropical commodities used by biodiesel industries among others.

Additionally, there was territorial depeasantisation evidenced by the absorption of peasant lands into export-focused projects led either by economic elites or multinationals, or in the case of Santurbán, by the state too. In these cases, the depeasantisation has been characterised by peasant displacement. As a consequence of the decimation of peasantries to advance monocultures,

mega-mining industries, or even national privatised parks, food production in these sub-regions decreased. This chapter has argued that even though the 1991 Constitution mandated that lands should be prioritised for food production, consecutive national and local governments instead prioritised the stimuli to land owning and use for private profit based not on food, but on investments in the speculation markets, non-food commodity crops or mega-mining among others. Food security and food sovereignty, therefore, were then neglected in landscapes where anti-peasant forces succeeded with their land 'cleansing'.

This chapter has argued that between 1990 and 2013, different forms of violence acted upon the peasants and their landscapes, evidenced by injustices such as the violation of human rights, market injustice and environmental injustice, with mutually-reinforcing impacts on peasant lives and Nature. In terms of depeasantisation, perhaps the most disruptive factor was the global free market which established the neo-colonial, and internally colonial capitalist conditions from which other stressors derive or worsen their effect: the global environmental injustice, the land 'cleansing' wrought by paramilitary violence and market rejection of peasant food to prioritise profits.

In the face of the development of profitable large-scale extractive industries, such as the cases of gold mega-mining and oil palm plantations, and in order to take over land and other resources, new rural elites in Colombia have considerably reduced these peasantries. Many peasants were displaced permanently and some were violently 'disappeared'. However, these communities have shown enormous capacities of resilience, fuelled by their radical relationality to their territories.

As a result, tensions have escalated around peasant land, water, seeds and markets in recent years. In Los Montes de María and Santurbán, two quite dissimilar and distant sub-regions, socio-environmental conflicts have been provoked and exacerbated around water resources rather than just land, as was the case in previous chapters. In these two cases analysed, downstream cities, agribusiness and even other communities, including civil society, turned hostile and confrontational toward highland peasantries regarding water management. Displacement, extreme climate variability, surrounding extractive activities promoted by the government-elites alliances and capitalist market pressures drove these highland peasantries towards major dependency on their water resources which are threatened by the climate crisis. Therefore, there was also

an impact on downstream communities – such as the city of Bucaramanga, or crops requiring high amounts of water such as rice and oil palm in Los Montes de María. In these cases, the lowlands' water demand turned into a new threat upon highland peasants who emerged in the eyes of downstream communities as suppliers. This became a conservationist cause justifying anti-peasantism. The peasants were portrayed as the ones who contaminate and abuse the resource, while lower users were 'paying' for it, therefore, acquiring 'privileges' or 'ownership'. The *Montemariano* peasants coined for them the term *acuatenientes*, an analogy to the possessive and hoarding greed and the exercise of patriarchal and colonial power exhibited by *terratenientes* towards the land. The fact that downstream communities were affected by the water uses in the highlands led to the misconception that they should not only influence but also take vital decisions over the governance of these territories, ignoring the peasantries who inhabit them. These conflicts have been poorly handled by national and local governments who prioritised profit maximisation over food production. Therefore, counter-reformist policies of disintegrating peasant supporting institutions and funds and promotion of mining and energy productions have, on the contrary, boosted the trend for peasant disenfranchisement.

Desperate peasantries, tired of being at continuous risk of armed violence, climate crisis, anti-peasant activity and bankruptcy and also facing the unjust conditions of the FTAs, re-organised their political and social movements, re-establishing leaderships and representation and, in a long nation-wide wave of manifestation and protests, emerged as a relevant nation-wide socio-political group with the 2013 Great Peasant Strike.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis critically assesses the counter-reformist impacts of agrarian policies on peasants' food sovereignty in three Colombian sub-regions between the 1961 Agrarian and Social Reform (SAR) and the 2013 Great Peasant Strike. In Colombia, the Chicoral Pact of 1972 is popularly known as 'the' agrarian counter-reform; however this thesis argues that there have been not one but many counter-reforms of a diverse nature across the period of study, and that some aspects of 1960-80s developmentalist agrarian reforms and 1990s neoliberal reforms and policies have, in practice, also had counter-reformist effects.

The empirical backbone of this thesis has been the extensive fieldwork material collected from three case study sites, in collaboration with approximately one hundred peasants from Santurbán, Los Montes de María and the Coffee Axis, who shared their environmental memories with me. Using an interdisciplinary methodology, the fieldwork conducted and data gathered for this thesis has fuelled analysis of both the damages to food security and to the rights of peasants and Nature that has been wrought by agrarian reforms and policies based on global paradigms and guidelines implemented in Colombia. By doing so, this thesis contributes a radically peasantist perspective to the understanding of how some key social, environmental and food injustices have evolved in the recent history of the peasant landscape and agriculture in Colombia. The Colombian communities studied here correspond to peasant cultures, and as such share similar socio-economic conditions and characteristics that identify them as peasantries. However, these peasantries in lowlands, Andean highlands, and slope-agricultural lands are agriculturally dissimilar and geographically distant. This is the first academic study to compare agrarian reforms across these three different sub-regions as case studies. The fact that these peasantries' asynchronous degradation processes catalysed peasants and farmers across the nation into one united protest in 2013 is a very striking development. This thesis has tracked the main drivers of this massive display of discontent, marginalisation and victimisation to understand why and how these peasantries' different paths led to a similar range of vulnerabilities and tensions. This thesis supports the need for a

decolonial approach to the peasant question which incorporates a dialogue between epistemologies, recognising peasant systems of knowledge as equal. This is based on the historical proof that vertical impositions, patriarchal influence and 're-education' have not only reproduced colonial values, but also have evidently not worked well either for the society or the Nature involved.

Primarily, this thesis argues and demonstrates that agrarian reforms and counter-reforms, which originated in global agri-food regimes and were applied in Colombia by consecutive governments, had localised ramifications on peasantries of the three sub-regions. There were three main interconnected impacts found in all three case studies: depeasantisation, a loss of food sovereignty and environmental degradation. The analysis of these three impacts provides critical insights into localised impacts of 'anti-peasantist' agrarian reformism, which are relevant not only to history, agrarian studies and rural development, but also to policy-makers today.

Peasant agriculture has connected peoples to the lands and Nature they belong to for generations. In Colombia, this also involves a territoriality through which Afro-descendant and indigenous-descendant cultures have co-evolved with the environment over four centuries into contemporary peasantries. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, they have also been transformed by agrarian policies imposed on them. A political analysis of the reasons why governments have sought to lift people out of the 'peasantry' has been outside the main scope and focus of this thesis, however some of their causal factors across regions and across the period of study have been unveiled. One of those was the influence of external ideologies that portrayed peasantries as unproductive or as a liability for economic growth and progress, particularly stemming from classic underdevelopment models. Additionally, peasants' autonomy and free use of land, waters and seeds over which competitors – *terratenientes*, *acuaténientes*, agrarian elites or investors – had economic interests resulted in peasants being perceived by these actors as an obstacle to their profits. Capitalism and profit maximisation using peasants' natural resources could not tolerate the coexistence with peasantries and required their erasure, transformation or absorption.

This thesis evidences the negative local-level effects of national agrarian reforms in late twentieth-century Colombia, confirming critical readings previously made by scholars such as Machado or Fajardo, but at a national

level.¹ It develops the existing literature by arguing that – almost paradoxically – Colombia’s agrarian policies and reforms between 1961 and 2013 have actually had counter-reformist impacts. This has been not only inferred from listening, witnessing, and reflecting upon my fieldwork among the peasantries and their landscapes, but also from interrogating, cross-referencing and triangulating peasants’ memories against agricultural statistics and archival evidence. My analysis suggests that, with few exceptions, agrarian reforms since the 1960s have been planned and implemented with a technocratic conviction that peasant economies were inferior and unproductive – what Uribe-López called an ‘anti-peasant bias’ – and as a result, peasant experience and knowledge was marginalised in their enactment.² This, combined with local socio-political tensions and structural inequalities in Colombian society, resulted in policies that when enacted resulted in depeasantisation, loss of food sovereignty and environmental degradation.

The agrarian reform project Bolívar 1 of 1966 fully illustrates this idea: since it was calibrated towards producing ‘rural development’ with less peasant-like agricultural forms, it re-shaped landscapes and promoted industrial monocrops, causing not just population displacement but also other forms of depeasantisation. Bolívar 1 also exemplifies another key finding of this thesis: through the progression of counter-reforms and their local impacts, the three effects mentioned – depeasantisation, environmental impact, and loss of food sovereignty – have had an accumulative, mutually-reinforcing, character. Unjust market conditions and other forms of violence forcing the abandonment of peasant agricultural practices have built upon each other in a vicious cycle, worsening until they reached a nadir in 2013 when the Great Strike erupted.³

Depeasantisation, the first key consequence of counter-reformist policies, does not imply the disappearance of peasant communities but rather a

¹ Absalón Machado Cartagena, “De la reforma agraria a la reforma rural,” in *Colombia: tierra y paz: experiencias y caminos para la reforma agraria alternativas para el siglo XXI, 1961-2001*, ed. Instituto Colombiano de la Reforma Agraria (Bogotá: INCORA, 2002), 38–52; Machado Cartagena, “La cuestión agraria frente al neoliberalismo”; Fajardo Montaña, *Tierra, poder político y reformas agraria y rural*.

² Uribe-López, “Estilo de desarrollo y sesgo anticampesino en Colombia”; Mauricio Uribe López, *La nación vetada: estado, desarrollo y guerra civil en Colombia*, Primera edición (Bogotá: Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2013).

³ Mauricio Uribe López, “La cuestión rural y la paz en Colombia,” *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Social*, October 2015; Uribe López, *La nación vetada*.

distortion of peasant cultures, as this thesis demonstrates.⁴ Displacement, of course, remains the most obvious form of depeasantisation, as a process acting upon territories. However, this thesis argues that peasants themselves have been socio-culturally depeasantised through declining characteristics that they have recognised as critical to being considered 'peasants', such as living on the farm, using the family work-force, being part of the farm metabolism by growing one's own food, being part of a community, and/or sharing a close relationality to the land and Nature.⁵ Bolívar 1's separation of peasant families from their farms and the Coffee Zone's replacement of *pancoger* plots with coffee plants are the most striking cases of depeasantisation found by this research in the 1970s and 1980s.

The peasant testimonies collected for this thesis demonstrate that from their perspectives – outside of direct conflict-related violence – market pressure and neoliberal reforms have been the most pernicious vectors of depeasantisation, which, arguably, is itself a form of structural violence. I was able to trace synergies in the case study sub-regions between armed conflict-related violence and the economic stress of lands and crops losing value from land speculation resulting in deterritorialisation of peasant families, mostly after the 1990s open market and neoliberal reforms. Colombian rural policies that were designed to comply with global market demands and to attract international investment also created perverse incentives towards depeasantisation, in order to exploit resources in more profitable – but unsustainable – ways, such as the tourism industry in the Coffee Axis, the palm oil biofuel industry in Los Montes de María, and in gold, silver and carbon mining industries in Santurbán. I found that food commoditisation, property markets, eco-capitalist initiatives, global minerals, and fuel markets which mobilised powerful investors have all been determinants in the transformation of peasant landscapes and depeasantisation. These effects on peasantries raise a severe critique of globalisation, suggesting that even though the international market was organised according to WTO trade rules, it is skewed in favour of

⁴ This is an adjustment made by Van der Ploeg himself in recent works with respect to his initial definition in his 'Chayanovian Manifesto', as the peasants' disappearance: Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*.

⁵ From the Bryceson's criteria plus radical relationality. For more references see the section 'Peasantries' In the Introduction. Mainly: Bryceson, Kay, and Mooij, *Disappearing Peasantries?*; Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics*, 2020.

the powerful investors, corporations and elites, deepening socio-economic asymmetries and therefore creating social and environmental injustice. Peasantries have been largely ignored or misinterpreted both in global and Colombian environmental and agrarian histories to date. Drawing from peasants' experiences, I argue that these depeasantisation processes are key to understanding the transformations of both territories and peasantries.

The second consequence outlined in my main argument, the loss of food sovereignty, implies both depeasantisation itself and incremental food insecurity. Food sovereignty involves peasant agriculture, subsistence crops, caring for Nature, traditional recipes and the ability to be a substantial part of short and local food supply chains to urban centres. Peasant food sovereignty has been negatively impacted across all of the case study sub-regions by multiple and varied factors. These included the disappearance of wheat in Santurbán from the 1960s to the 1980s which eroded peasant communal traditions, and the loss of biodiversity and the advance of pathogens due to climate change and forced abandonment, among other factors, in Los Montes de María. In the cases of depeasantised 'Bolívar 1' beneficiaries and the coffee growers' replacement of their *pancoger* plots, food sovereignty was practically obliterated and replaced by food dependency. Most of these transitions aimed to increase the peasants' income through better yields, with wheat and other food imports intended to assist in the population's nutrition. However, evidence from this study suggests that the food security created in those conditions was temporary and caused mid- to long-term dependency and instability.

Furthermore, when conditions worsen as they did with the end of the ICA's arranged quotas in 1989, or the advent of FTAs in 2012, some of the wellbeing generated was lost, farms went bust and food insecurity increased. Thus, this thesis reaffirms that food sovereignty is an essential condition for peasantries' food security. An implication of this is that policies aimed at increasing food security through yield and profit maximisation risk having the opposite effect when they contravene principles of food sovereignty for peasant communities.

The third part of the main argument focuses on the negative environmental impacts that resulted from putting 'food as a commodity' above 'food as a right'. This focus on 'food as a commodity' was a result of technocratic, productivist mindsets and of the Green Revolution. The results of this research support the claim that the Green Revolution was a missionary-

style neo-colonial programme to maximise production and revenue that caused environmental degradation to ecosystems, especially in biodiversity and soil health.⁶ This thesis used decolonial and critical subaltern approaches to its analysis of the Green Revolution, tackling the orthodox ‘saviour’ narrative surrounding it. So whilst the intensification of coffee production has been presented as environmentally beneficial by Guhl and FEDECAFÉ, peasant coffee growers’ observations by contrast associate it with the advance of leaf rust.⁷ Similarly, Santurbán peasants who migrated to mainly potato crops following American wheat dumping and adopted ‘*semillas exigentes*’ (demanding seeds) report that these required a lot of agrochemicals, additives that they call ‘poison’ and ‘agrotoxics’, which ‘tired’ the land and overused water. *Montemariano* peasants added that the weedkillers recommended for the technified rice not only targeted plants considered ‘weeds’ but also edible plants often planted in the same plots, such as yucca or yam. Overall, the major peasant landscape transformations and environmental impacts I found in the Andean sites studied were driven by the Green Revolution and its depeasantising counter-reformist effects that stemmed from the principle that large high-yield monocrops were superior to peasant agrodiverse plant varieties. Food plants which could be reproduced from heirloom seeds were discarded in favour of crops produced through extractive methods. This affected peasantries by breaking their radical relationality with their territory, decoupling culture from Nature. It also impacted lands by promoting practices which exhaust their resources. This thesis found that of the three sub-regions studied, the Coffee Axis, due to the long-lasting paternal influence built by the Federation, was the most impacted by the environmental consequences of the Green Revolution and the depeasantisation triggered by rural maldevelopment.

⁶ Claim posed by several scholars as Shiva, Patel, Wise among others: Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics* (London ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J., USA : Penang, Malaysia: Zed Books ; Third World Network, 1991); Patel, “The Long Green Revolution”; Timothy A. Wise, *Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers, and the Battle for the Future of Food* (New York: The New Press, 2019); Pingali et al., “Confronting the Environmental Consequences of the Green Revolution in Asia”; Pimentel and Pimentel, “Comment.”

⁷ McCook, *Coffee Is Not Forever*; Stuart McCook, “Environmental History of Coffee in Latin America,” in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History*, by Stuart McCook (Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–30; Eugenio Schieber and G.A. Zentmyer, “Coffee Rust in the Western Hemisphere,” *Plant Disease* 68, no. 2 (1984): 89–90; M.A. Cristancho et al., “Outbreak of Coffee Leaf Rust (*Hemileia Vastatrix*) in Colombia,” *New Disease Reports* 25 (April 5, 2012): 19.

This thesis provides empirical evidence in support of the idea that food production which depletes soils and natural resources is extractive, and is contrary to the peasant principle of life reproduction.⁸ Other forms of extractivism such as mining or plantations for biofuel production also displaced peasant food production in favour of profit. *Pancoger* or subsistence crops were in some cases also replaced to make 'better use' of the soil, undermining food sovereignty. Thus, these findings clearly indicate that depeasantisation, loss of food sovereignty, and environmental impacts are all intrinsically connected in the case studies, all being caused by anti-peasant policies. These policies were enacted in compliance with global demands and in collusion with powerful private capital, but blamed peasantries for being a liability and/or partly responsible for their own 'underdevelopment'.⁹ This type of narrative dominated government communications to justify the 1970s *terratiente* counter-reform.¹⁰ This demonstrates what peasants themselves, and this researcher, regard as the 'colonial mindset' of agrarian reform in Colombia.

This leads me to a secondary argument emerging from this thesis: that anti-peasant agrarian reforms/counter-reforms had the dual characteristic of being both neo-colonial and colonial at the same time. These reforms and counter-reforms observed international macropolitics and interventions such as the Alliance for Progress and the Washington Consensus prescriptions, and in this sense they were neo-colonial. They have also, however, been used by national, and local, political and economic elites to perpetuate colonial legacies – such as highly unequal access to arable land and/or the privileges coming from patriarchal, racial and classist oppression exercised by elites against peasantries – and therefore they are also, in practice, internally colonial. In rural areas these colonial legacies are mostly related to land tenure structures and are viewed by peasants as actions of those elites they call *terratientes*, a term that in the late twentieth century came to represent capitalist greed,

⁸ Laura Rodriguez Castro, "Extractivism and Territorial Dispossession in Rural Colombia: A Decolonial Commitment to *Campesinas*' Politics of Place," *Feminist Review* 128, no. 1 (July 2021): 44–61; Ye et al., "The Incursions of Extractivism."

⁹ Cristóbal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Chris Carlson, "Agrarian Structure and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Bringing the Latifundio 'Back In,'" *Latin American Research Review* 54, no. 3 (September 17, 2019): 678–93; Maristella Svampa, *The Latin American Critique of Development*, ed. Ashish Kothari et al. (New Delhi: Tulika Books and Authorsupfront, 2019).

¹⁰ Vallejo Mejía, *Memorias 1973-1974*.

land/resource grabbing and accumulation. Testimonial and archival evidence, as well as secondary literature, has also characterised *terrateniente* – and *acuateniente* – power as based on principles of acquisitiveness, domination, patriarchalism, racism and classism. This is the case for all three sub-regions studied. A key implication of this argument is that we also need to re-think repeasantising processes as being about more than populating land with peasants or adopting peasant agricultural traditions, but also as efforts to decolonise our food systems.

As a consequence of this internal coloniality implicit within agrarian counter-reforms, both peasants' and Nature's rights were repeatedly violated in these three regions throughout the period of study. Peasants' food security and food sovereignty was therefore undermined. This thesis does not however support an essentialised view of peasantries being mere passive victims of counter-reformist actions. On the contrary, this thesis has argued that internal colonialism has also influenced peasantries themselves from within. As discussed throughout the thesis, many of the peasant testimonies collected for this project contain reflections of guilt and self-criticism which acknowledge peasant's own roles in depeasantisation and creating food insecurity, including their acceptance of usurious credits, not keeping their parents' heirloom seeds alive, adopting pollutant agro-chemicals which caused soil depletion, and/or deforestation near rivers. As such, peasants were victims but not always innocent or passive victims; they were on some occasions also agents of their own depeasantisation. However, their testimonies reveal that throughout this period, there have also been peasant organisations, leadership, resistance and collective memory processes that have built a remarkable ability to socially and politically navigate changes and to develop peasant-led repeasantisation strategies to counter the negative processes this thesis has outlined.

This thesis also argues that, regardless of past unsuccessful experiences, it is important to defend the implementation of peasantist and integral agrarian reforms in order to create sustainable agri-food systems. This thesis shows various ways in which agrarian reforms, applied in the three sub-regions studied, have acted in a counter-reformist fashion between 1961 and 2013; therefore, it may seem contradictory that it also asserts that agrarian reform is necessary for the development of food security and peasant rights. This thesis, however, also identifies times when agri-food policies and reforms

produced positive outcomes among the studied peasantries. Peasant testimonies, as well as statistical and archival evidence, have established that the land redistribution achieved by Lleras-Restrepo's government in collaboration with ANUC in the 1970s facilitated the survival of self-sufficient and autonomous Afro-peasant communities which – despite the barbaric violence they suffered during conflict in Los Montes de María – still inhabit that region. It was probably thanks to ANUC's intervention in the 1970s agrarian reform that Los Montes de María is, among the three sub-regions of study, the one which has exhibited the least advanced stage of depeasantisation. Along the same line, public purchases, stock and import controls by the Agricultural Marketing Institute (IDEMA), and even prices granted by the International Coffee Pact, did improve peasant livelihoods and wellbeing. Although peasantries are not capitalist units, they are inserted in the capitalist economic system through their commercial relations. Therefore, the market stability and security which IDEMA, ICA and peasant purchases schemes provided were vital for the peasantries' sustainability. Unfortunately, from the period of neoliberal transformations in 1989-96 onwards, the peasants interviewed do not remember any agrarian reform or policy being beneficial to their ways of life or protective of their presence and autonomy in the territories. Those earlier reforms might sound archaic and protectionist today, and yet I must emphasise that they made a difference in terms of equity for peasantries and small food producers who, not being capitalist units per se, navigated within a sector dominated by international and national capitalist powers.¹¹

This thesis has introduced an original historical reading of agri-food policies, which is rooted in popular/peasant environmentalism and peasantries' epistemologies, enhanced by drawing on a combination of disciplines and knowledges, and guided by environmental history approaches. It is the first study to compare the experiences of peasantries in the higher Andean moorland, the Andean temperate slopes and the Caribbean savannahs. However, it has raised as many questions as it has answered, and many new avenues for future research have been identified. Apart from the common socioenvironmental impact of agri-food policies, it makes evident that agrarian studies remain land-centred in Colombia, but water-grabbing is increasingly

¹¹ Van der Ploeg, *Peasants and the Art of Farming*.

becoming an issue for peasants since 2012. The analysis of water-related conflicts in Santurbán, Los Montes de María and the Coffee Axis points toward the urgency of dissecting the history of the politics and practices of water management and tenancy misconceptions. Future environmental history research in these regions would also benefit from engaging more with quantitative and cartographic methods to analyse transformations in the landscape related to political violence, agrarian counter-reforms and depeasantisation. Whilst this thesis has been focused on pre-established peasantries, a natural progression for future research would be to extend the comparative analysis to other regions, or to incorporate different peasant identities such as indigenous peasants in the Southern Andes. Such a study might provide new evidence and add to or challenge this project's findings on agrarian counter-reforms and their effect on food sovereignty. This dissertation also opened questions about impacts of agrarian policies on peasant women's food culture. The intersection of food sovereignty histories and peasant feminisms certainly deserves further extensive research. Repeasantisation and resistance strategies are topics which, in their contrast with depeasantisation, might also hold value for Critical Agrarian Studies.

This thesis has only analysed three specific case studies; however, there is a wide variety of peasantries in Colombia and even though this comparative study worked with quite dissimilar cases, these findings must be carefully interpreted if used for generalisations, particularly at national level. To replicate or widen this research in other parts of the country, there are further variables which might have to be considered such as migration, additional types of violence or greater incidence of drug trafficking and illicit crops, among others. Therefore, I recommend caution when transferring or generalising these findings, even to other rural communities in the sub-regions, considering that not all inhabitants are peasants.

In the last five decades the peasantries of the Global South have endured many waves of anti-peasant policies that aim to increase agricultural profits. I argue that in many cases, rather than serving the needs of the rural communities, these policies responded to the needs of global markets that dismiss the socio-environmental realities of the places they aimed to transform. This is why, as this dissertation has shown, they disenfranchised peasants, threatened food security and accelerated the degradation of ecosystems. I

cannot highlight this enough: it has been a mistake to think that because peasant rights and food sovereignty defend heritage and traditions, peasantries are obsolete monolithic communities. On the contrary, they are highly resilient and dynamic, and they keep on growing in numbers, visibility and political and social activism. Through these *cafetero*, *Montemariano* and *paramuno* peasantries' testimonies I learned how they embrace their past, sometimes with pride and sometimes with embarrassment, in order to define their current struggles – and these current struggles also shape the way they narrate their past. In this way they are always reflecting on how they can keep surviving and building better futures for their kin, for their – and our – food, and for the territory they belong to, in such hostile and difficult times. The struggle of these 'peoples of the land' deserves respect and support, for their relationship with their environment will become ever more important in future decades of climate change and disruption. As they themselves state:

We are peasants 'by nature'... We were born in the land, we remain in the land, we belong to the land and we 'envision ourselves' in the land.¹²

¹² *Memories of Participants No. 64, 65, 66 (Collective Interview).*

Epilogue: Repeasantisation

The peaceful process of the *Alta Montaña* emerged from the communities' need for reconciliation after the armed conflict... We became enemies and had invisible borders... something had to be done. We all belonged to this region. How could we remain suspicious of each other when we needed to gather forces because the land was so devastated and abandoned? We had to fight together for our territory... so we started to re-approach, shaking hands, breaking down barriers.¹

This thesis has recounted histories of the loss of food sovereignty, food security and ecosystems' health experienced by Colombian peasantries, and the depeasantisation that they faced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. However, theirs is not a story only of loss, of suffering, of victimhood. It is also one of agency, of action, and recent years have highlighted the significance of peasant voices and agency in pushing for repeasantisation to combat these historical processes of depeasantisation. Whilst it is not possible fully address mechanisms of re-establishing peasantry – and peasant-ness – in these sub-regions nor fully address the events of 2013 and the Great Peasant Strike and to bring the thesis up to the present day, this epilogue serves to remind the reader, and the historian, that there are also positive remarks because peasantries' relationality with land has not been entirely broken. They are struggling to defend their permanence in their territories by improving their politico-economic and social standing within Colombia, reconciling with their communities, re-connecting with Nature to reverse negative effects of the Green Revolution, and to advance their food sovereignty: these efforts together form a process of *repeasantisation* to counter the *depeasantisation* that has been explored in the preceding chapters. This epilogue serves as a brief outline of events from 2013 and after to foreground the repeasantisation efforts that are currently underway, and which framed the memories of many of this study's interviewees, as a way of acknowledging their contemporary agency.

Repeasantisation is the opposite of depeasantisation processes. According to Van der Ploeg, it happens when the number of peasantries in a rural area increases, or their agricultural practices become more peasant-like

¹ *Memories of Participant No.48.*

again.² I have argued across this thesis that peasantries could depeasantise themselves when they detached from their relational care to their lands, waters and seeds or lost cultural traditions. I have also argued that depeasantisation processes are forms of coloniality of being, power and knowledge.³

Repeasantisation strategies are consequently decolonial efforts to re-encounter peasant roots for a renewed exercise of territoriality and self-identity, both individually and collectively. Emergent forms of repeasantisation are evidenced in each of this thesis' three case study sub-regions, exemplified by new peasant organisations, social mobilisation, new collective identities, agrarian retro-innovation and historical memory initiatives, among other developments.

The repeasantising developments in the three case study sub-regions were inspired by the global peasant and the food sovereignty movements, informed about the FTA's threat by local left-wing socio-political leaders, and driven by recent experiences of persecution, particularly by the criminalisation of peasants for sharing seeds. Globally, repeasantising movements became evident worldwide in the late twentieth century, led by the New Peasantries movement in Eastern Europe in the 1980s and the emergence of a transnational movement of self-identified peasants, La Vía Campesina, in response to the "neoliberal threat" in the early 1990s.⁴ The words opening the 1993 Mons Declaration marked the 'return' of the global peasantry: "We, representatives of peasant organisations from the Caribbean, North, Central and South America, Asia and Europe, gathered in Mons, Belgium...".⁵ Although peasants in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean were never really gone, it was the European farm groups' activism which made scholars take modern peasantries seriously and not as an anchor to the medieval past or merely a 'Third World' phenomenon.

² Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization* (Abingdon: Earthscan, 2009); Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, "From De-to Repeasantization: The Modernization of Agriculture Revisited," *Journal of Rural Studies* 61 (July 2018): 236–43.

³ The three types of decoloniality from: Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality*; Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept," *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 2007): 240–70.

⁴ Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries*; María Elena Martínez-Torres and Peter M. Rosset, "La Vía Campesina: The Birth and Evolution of a Transnational Social Movement," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37, no. 1 (January 2010): 149–75.

⁵ Norges Bondelang (NB) - Norway et al., "Mons Declaration," 1.

Colombian peasant groups such as ANUC participated in the initial structure of La Vía Campesina. However, intensification of armed conflict following the spread of paramilitary violence inhibited their rural activism and ultimately caused more peasant displacement during the following couple of decades. The initial national form of repeasantisation in twenty-first century Colombia was, therefore, the post-conflict return to the land following land restitution to rightful peasant owners as part of the 2011 Victims' Law. New Colombian peasant movements such as the National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones (ANZORC), born in 2011, engaged with La Vía Campesina, both prompting and following food sovereignty struggles in the country. Other associations formed during the Peasant Strike also became members of La Vía Campesina after 2013. Therefore, apart from the studied depeasantising pressures, factors such as global repeasantising efforts, national peace negotiations, and the de-escalation of the armed conflict contributed to the instigation of local repeasantising initiatives in these three subregions.

Repeasantisation by Socio-political Action

The historical period covered by this thesis closed with the 2013 Great Agrarian Strike, also called the Peasant Strike, a massive grassroots and peasant-led series of protests and marches across the country and throughout the year, which responded to the agri-food sector crisis. Discontent and demands for reparative action emerged across the three subregions of study and fuelled subsequent repeasantisation.

The peasantries of the *Alta Montaña* undertook the 'Avocado March' – a collective walk from Los Montes de María to Cartagena City – on 6-7 April as part of their broader action for peaceful processes of reconciliation in the region.⁶ It was organised by communities associated in a collective called 'the peaceful process of reconciliation of the *Alta Montaña*' who were affected by combined impact of avocado trees die-off and paramilitary violence. As the peasant leader cited in the epigraph above explained, after the rupture they had experienced, not only with their territories but also their own communities and neighbouring communities, a strategy of reattachment was needed. In response

⁶ Becerra Becerra et al., *Un Bosque de Memoria Viva: Desde La Alta Montaña de El Carmen de Bolívar*.

to the demands for compensation and solution to the avocado disease situation, the government agreed on financing the research and the historical memory work with the CNMH called the *Bosque de memoria viva* (Living Memory Forest), developed by the communities themselves.⁷ They also formed the collective called ‘the process of *Alta Montaña*’ to take advantage of the momentum and maintain a sustainable organisation.

In the coffee zone and Santurbán the marches and protests of the 2013 Great Strike were fuelled by the prospect of bankruptcy after the signing of the FTA in the previous year. The associated rounds of negotiations with peasants and farmers were mainly focused not on the land question, but rather on food provisioning policies. While the government had neglected local food production in favour of expanding agroindustries for tropical commodities’ exports, small farmers and peasants insisted on the importance of local and national food sovereignty.⁸ Following one of the testimonies collected by this thesis, this strike had three main moments:

We had three stages. First, there was a national coffee strike. Then, a much-loved fight that we called the strike of the *ruanas*, which was fundamentally composed of cold-highlander producers. And a third one involving everyone.⁹

These peasants and food growers were also rebelling against the patriarchal domain of their Federations, which under free trade conditions were no longer working for them. Therefore, some of them created alternative groups to the Federations called *Dignidades* (Dignities), such as Onion Dignity, Potato Dignity, and – the forerunner, mentioned in the opening quotation - Coffee Dignity. The *Dignidad Cafetera* movement (Coffee Dignity) evolved from the *Unión Cafetera* (Coffee Union), a collective created in 1986 to counteract the power of FEDECAFÉ whose activities intensified after the ICA dissolution in 1989 and grew nationwide during the FTA negotiations with the US in 2006.¹⁰ The FTA’s signing in 2012 contributed to the large scale and national scope of

⁷ Becerra Becerra et al.

⁸ Felipe Roa-Clavijo, *The Politics of Food Provisioning in Colombia: Agrarian Movements and Negotiations with the State*, Earthscan Food and Agriculture (New York, NY: Routledge, 2021).

⁹ *Memories of Participant No.38*.

¹⁰ Unión Cafetera Colombiana, *Aspectos Generales Del Café*; “Saludamos La Fundación de La Unión Cafetera.”

the 2013 protests. The national coffee strike in February 2013 opened the Great Agrarian Strike. The Indigenous organisation *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (Cauca Regional Indigenous Council) and other Southern peasants who also depended on coffee crops joined the protests.¹¹ Following their example, the highlander Andes peasants who were mostly small dairy farmers and onion or potato grower *paramunos* also mobilised in April. This was the second stage mentioned in the quote by Oscar Gutiérrez, *Dignidades* leader. Highlander peasants in the Northeastern Andes generally use *ruanas* (Colombian ponchos) as part of their outfit and *ruanas* are symbolic elements of Colombian peasant cultures, therefore at this stage of the protest the movement was called by the media ‘the rebellion of the *ruanas*’.¹² The movement was centred in the department of Boyacá, but the onion grower peasants from Berlín in Santurbán also joined in August.¹³ Over the months May to August, other peasant organisations joined. By September, they had organised the National Table of Agricultural Unity, the National Agricultural and Popular Table of Interlocution and Agreement and the National Agrarian Coordination (CNA) for the Peasant, Ethnic and Popular Summit, all ready to negotiate demands with the government.¹⁴

The Colombian government largely ignored their demands during the first seven months (February-August) and held only small negotiation tables whilst aggressively repressing the marches, injuring many peasants.¹⁵ In an attempt to hide the situation, and denigrating peasant actions in the process, President Santos declared in August that: “¡El tal paro no existe!” (Such a strike does not exist!).¹⁶

¹¹ CRIC, “Cauca y el suroccidente de Colombia participan en el paro nacional cafetero,” ORG, *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca - CRIC* (blog), March 3, 2013, cric-colombia.org/portal/cauca-y-el-suroccidente-de-colombia-participan-en-el-paro-nacional-cafetero/; Nelson Lombana Silva, “Paro Nacional Cafetero En Tolima: Terrorismo de Estado vs. Resistencia Popular,” ORG, *Agencia de Prensa Rural* (blog), March 3, 2013, prensarural.org/spip/spip.php?article10348.

¹² *Semana*, “La rebelión de las ruanas,” *Semana*, August 24, 2013, sec. Últimas Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo, semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-rebelion-ruanas/355181-3/; Élber Gutiérrez Roa and Héctor Sandoval Duarte, “La rebelión de las ruanas,” *El Espectador*, August 30, 2013, sec. Política, elespectador.com/politica/la-rebelion-de-las-ruanas-article-443385/.

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¹⁴ Edwin Cruz Rodríguez, “La Protesta Social En El Primer Gobierno de Juan Manuel Santos,” *Jurídicas CUC* 10, no. 1 (August 27, 2014): 233–81.

¹⁵ *Memories of Participant No.32*; Lombana Silva, “Paro Nacional Cafetero En Tolima: Terrorismo de Estado vs. Resistencia Popular.”

¹⁶ This sentence was widely ridiculed, and overwhelmed by evidence, the President was forced to retract. See: *Semana*, “Santos: ‘El tal paro nacional agrario no existe,’” *Semana.com*, August

Finally, however, after acknowledging the seriousness of the strike and their agents, an 'Agrarian Pact' was offered by the government in November. It was based on three pillars: FTAs, productive alliances and contract farming. These, however, were all capitalist solutions which subordinated peasant production. Contract farming, such as the palm oil model in María La Baja, was considered by peasants to be a form of modern slavery which resembled colonial plantations, so in negotiations they refused to legitimise such an offer.¹⁷ The peasants' demands, by contrast, included such requirements as protection for national food sovereignty. The defence of Colombian food production in the face of free trade was, in fact, the central point of conflict with the government.¹⁸ This is because the government, in alliance with agrarian elites, pushed for an exports model which sacrificed important food staples to benefit tropical commodities which, as seen throughout this thesis, was detrimental for peasant economies.

The greatest achievement of the Great Peasant Strike was the annulment of rules which criminalised free seeds, specifically the Decree 970. Some reactive and emergency measures were also taken, such as freezing some food imports and reducing the agro-input tariffs for two years.¹⁹ However, the deep changes demanded regarding agri-food policies, needed to combat the underlying problems of Colombian peasantries, have not been addressed so far.²⁰ Some of the peasant organisation's petitions were included in the Integral Rural Reform point of the Peace Agreement with FARC in 2016, but to date, this is the least advanced of the accord's commitments.²¹

25, 2013, sec. Últimas Noticias de Colombia y el Mundo, semana.com/nacion/articulo/santos-el-paro-nacional-agrario-no-existe/355264-3/.

¹⁷ Aurelio Suárez Montoya, "Pacto Agrario en Colombia, ¿a lo Cargill siglo XXI?," *Centre of Economic Studies on Labour Cedetrabajo* (blog), accessed January 10, 2021, cedetrabajo.org/pacto-agrario-en-colombia-a-lo-cargill-siglo-xxi/; Cedetrabajo, "Definitivamente, un Pacto Agrario sin campesinos," *Centre of Economic Studies on Labour Cedetrabajo* (blog), November 21, 2013, cedetrabajo.org/definitivamente-un-pacto-agrario-sin-campesinos/.

¹⁸ Roa-Clavijo, *The Politics of Food Provisioning in Colombia*.

¹⁹ Sandra Liliana Angarita Arteaga, "Análisis de la incidencia de las organizaciones campesinas en las políticas públicas agrarias (2013-2016): estudio de caso, paro agrario nacional 2013" (Facultad de Medicina, Bogotá, Colombia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2019).

²⁰ Fieldwork observation.

²¹ Gobierno de la República de Colombia and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC-EP), "Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace" (La Habana, Cuba, November 24, 2016), <https://www.mesadeconversaciones.com.co/sites/default/files/24-1480106030.11-1480106030.2016nuevoacuerdofinal-1480106030.pdf>; Juanita Goebertus et al., "¿En Qué va La Paz? Las Cifras de La Implementación Informe 06: Actualización a Enero 2021," Informe de

Repeasantisation by Retro-innovation and Adaptation

In these peasantries, as in many other cases, forces of depeasantisation and repeasantisation coexist as flows in opposite directions. The return to a more peasant-like, agrodiverse and less agrochemical intensive agriculture is a form of repeasantisation which has not only helped peasantries adapt to survive within the globalised world and in times of climate crisis, but also to counter-act depeasantising agents. Agro-tourism and speciality coffee growing in the Coffee Axis and the alternative ploughing methods in Santurbán are the most salient examples of retro-innovation and adaptation in repeasantising agricultural practices. The term retro-innovation, borrowed from Van der Ploeg, means innovation with technologies adapted from traditional knowledge learned from elders.²²

In 2011, UNESCO recognised Colombia's Cultural Coffee Landscape (CCL) as a World Heritage site to preserve the region's peasant cultural traditions, not only involving agriculture but also traditional architecture and costumes, among other identity elements.²³ Such recognition supported efforts by coffee growers to reforest and improve their production by reversing previous environmental and agricultural damage. While FEDECAFÉ promoted so-called 'origin coffee', coffee grains with flavour 'notes' according to the place of origin, some more radical coffee growers recovered the shade grown coffee and promoted family farm brands with speciality coffees.²⁴ In 2012 many coffee growers barely existed in the category of peasantries any more, since they held a very limited food sovereignty and spent less time working their own lands and more in administrative and commercial tasks.²⁵ When coffee farmers adapted

seguimiento a la implementación del acuerdo de paz (Bogotá, Colombia: Congreso de la República de Colombia, 2021).

²² Van der Ploeg, *The New Peasantries Struggles for Autonomy and Sustainability in an Era of Empire and Globalization*, 2009.

²³ Catherine Winter, "Safeguarding Agricultural Heritage: The Case of Colombia's Coffee Cultural Landscape" (Masters Thesis (Historic Preservation), Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania, 2015).

²⁴ This strategy aimed to lead the Colombian coffee into the 'third wave of coffee'. León Vargas and López Díaz, *Federación Nacional de Cafeteros de Colombia, 1927-2017; Memories of Participant No.2 Anonymous (Interview 2), Eje Cafetero*, Recording (Manizales, Caldas, Colombia, 2019); *Memories of Participant No.28; Memories of Participant No.29; Memories of Participant No.30; Memories of Participant No.32*.

²⁵ From the introduction of this thesis: peasants live, either as owners, tenants, or administrators, in a small farm (F) with simultaneous subsistence and cash crops; use family (F) labour, meaning that they work the land directly; they are a differentiated class (C) with farm autonomy but external subordination to markets; and they live in communities (C).

their practices and diversified their farms, emphasising family labour and sustainability, it was part of a deliberate effort to be more peasant-like again. This constitutes a repeasantisation flow, although one that has not yet fully repaired the advanced state of depeasantisation in coffee regions.

In Santurbán, peasantries resisted 'wheat bankruptcy' through following the commercial guidance of the Green Revolution and migrating their crops to grow potatoes at the expense of becoming depeasantised and to the detriment of their surrounding endemic ecosystems. However, *paramuno* peasants retained their autonomy and diversity of crops, not being as absorbed by the potato federation as their coffee-growing peers were by FEDECAFÉ. They also preserved a good level of food self-sufficiency, which they have stubbornly defended. They have responded to the advance of eco-capitalism and the green gentrification of their lands with popular environmentalism and a return to more peasant-like agricultural practices. Their strong relationality with the *páramo* lands has included calls to restore environmentally-friendly and manual agricultural techniques to manage the agroecosystem. The most salient example of these initiatives are the retro-innovative ploughing techniques which are more labour intense like manual or animal traction. They have also introduced the small individual tiller devices called *motoazadas* (rotavators, or mini tillers), which can be homemade or imported, but cause less disruption to the land.

Adoption of Ethnic and Territorial Identities

When I got back [to Colombia, from exile], I was invited to an event. In the attendance form, [in the available categories] I saw all sectors: women, LGBTI +, Indigenous, Black, Roma, everyone. The word peasant did not appear anywhere. And when I intervened, I said: I am very sad because I come from a developed country where the peasant women and men do exist and here, they do not, because this obsolete bourgeoisie feels uncomfortable. [They are going to] destroy a culture, instead of taking it to learn from... there the children are taken to know the ravages of war and here they do not learn history, here the young people do not know the peasant leaders in the history.²⁶

Catalina Pérez

²⁶ *Memories of Participant No.72.*

The social category of 'peasants' had been widely ignored by the 1990s' neoliberal reformism which did, however, recognise special rights to Indigenous and ethnic populations. As mentioned in the introduction some advances have been made towards the political and legal recognition of peasant identity and status, which was a key demand in the 2013 Peasant Strike. In 2019 peasants were finally considered a category in official statistics formulated by DANE.²⁷ Systems to support community forms of knowledge and the learning and preservation of local oral memories, like those demanded by Catalina Pérez in the quote above, are still under development. The full adoption of peasant rights including land and food sovereignty, as stated in the UNDROP, has been proposed but Congress has not reached an agreement on the matter.

Informally and tacitly, however, peasantries in Colombia have exercised collective rights and commoning of their waters as part of their territories, and this practice is a crucial element of their culture. Currently, Afro-peasant self-identification in Los Montes de María is fundamental to securing access to state protection and resources to advance initiatives of ethno-education, historical memory and preservation of Afro-peasant heritage. In Santurbán, where the mere presence of inhabitants in the *páramo* is continuously questioned, the *paramuno* or *paramero* identity has become a key resistance tool. Peasants aim to enhance their right to their territory by evidencing that the survival of their culture depends strongly on their capability to inhabit, manage and develop a peasant economy connected to this landscape. They claim to be *raizales* (those-with-roots), because the *páramo* was the land of their ancestors, where their grandparents, parents and themselves were born. These identities also reinforce their self-identification as peasantries and are linguistic defences of peasant culture, therefore, they constitute repeasantisation mechanisms.

These efforts for repeasantisation within local communities, gaining back new generations, are profoundly decolonial as they establish alternative epistemologies and systems of knowledge founded in the wisdom of the elders and the capacity of the young. Based on discourses of new peasant organisations, the old 1960s motto '*tierra pa'l que la trabaja*' (land for those who

²⁷ DANE, "COLOMBIA - Encuesta de Cultura Política - ECP - 2019 - Microdatos," Microdata (Colombia: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística DANE, 2019), <http://microdatos.dane.gov.co>, Archivo Nacional de Datos ANDE, microdatos.dane.gov.co/index.php/catalog/644/.

work it) has been replaced by the contemporary focus on '*permanencia y defensa del territorio*' (permanence and defence of the territory).

Final Reflection

Since 2013, repeasantising efforts full of resistance, decoloniality and resilience have emerged in the studied sub-regions. These include the development of peasant organisations and movements related to the Great Strike, such as the Dignities, the National Agrarian Coordination and the Agrarian Summit. They now have voices and representatives in political spaces where they used to be excluded, and have pushed forward a peasant socio-political movement to reach Congress, and departmental and local Councils, although they have no political majorities to secure their policy aims so far. These socio-political interventions are strongly linked to their reclamation of territorial and ethnic identities, including 'Afro-peasantries' and '*paramuno* peasantries'.

These peasantries have faced varied forms of depeasantisation, anti-peasant oppression, forced displacement and market bankruptcy, and it is within these confrontations that they have found the strength to defend their lifestyles and territoriality. Peasant women in particular are struggling to find value in rural caregiving activities – towards lands, waters and seeds but also family, food and territory – in their own terms. In this sense, the peasant movements which gained momentum after 2013 have been organised towards two main stems: the integral reform of agri-food systems, and environmental and reparative justice.

Peasants state that they need no charity anymore, and instead demand structural transformations. Although accepting that they have been victims of state, physical and armed violence and structural violence, and presenting themselves as such to demand the reparations they are entitled to, peasantries refuse to be the 'losers' in the free market arena, the 'uncompetitive' producers in an unequal contest they never agreed to participate in anyway. Above all, they fight to keep their territories biodiverse, agrodiverse, clean, and alive, in the face of forces that are still today threatening their culture and food sovereignty.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Participant Information Sheet (English Translation)



Participant Information Sheet (English Translation)

Voluntary Colombian peasant

Title of Project: The Food Question: The agrarian counter-reforms and peasants' food insecurity in Colombia, 1961-2013

Researcher name: Diana María Valencia Duarte

Invitation and brief summary:

My research explores the impact of agrarian counter-reforms on food sovereignty and peasants' food security. By counter-reforms we mean all actions that generate hoarding of agrarian resources, such as land, water or seeds, and market. This research aims to review the contradictory policies, rural violence, monopolization of natural resources, land conflicts and pressures that have caused food sovereignty in the region or the family to be lost. We will review the period from the 1961 reforms to the 2013 Great Agrarian Strike. The oral memory that you can convey as a protagonist of this story will help to chronicle changes in your agriculture traditions and diet. This work will gather testimonies in three regions where these changes have taken place in very different ways: 1) The coffee region (temperate zone) 2) The Montes de María region ("warm land"), and, 3) the Santurbán páramo ("Cold land").

Key points:

- *Your participation is a narration of your own story around food and agriculture*
- *It is volunteered, and you can withdraw at any time*
- *You can choose not to answer any question*
- *Through this investigation, you can help to support the case of food security and food sovereignty for peasants.*
- *If you agree, you will be recorded*
- *Your personal information will be anonymous*
- *All the information you provide will be treated with confidentiality*
- *This study is part of a PhD History research for the University of Exeter, UK*

Please take the time to consider the information provided and to discuss with family or friends if you wish, or to ask all the questions you want to ask the researcher.

Purpose of the research:

This environmental history investigation explores peasant feeding as a fundamental part of the interaction between humans and nature. My interest is in the negative impact of hoarding of lands, natural resources and market, which generate food insecurity; and in the peasant landscape, when food sovereignty is lost and both peasant and natural environment undergo traumas, from change of land use to dispossession and displacement. It is an issue of national importance yet has not been addressed historically from the food perspective.

With your help, we can answer the question: How have agrarian counter-reforms impacted food sovereignty and food security in Colombia?

Why have I been approached?

I have selected three different regions with different dynamics of landscape transformations. 1) The "warm land" whose conquest was driven by governments eager to export tropical products, dispossessing agricultural communities settled there, 2) The temperate zone of the coffee corridor, where the Antioquian colonisation raised smallholdings with hillside crops (such as coffee) that were once highly productive for the region and the country in terms of exports, but have been eventually replaced. 3) The "páramo" (Andean tundra moorlands) are the last agricultural frontier, unattractive for coffee growers or exporters - there is no agroindustry there, but peasants who sow products that grow at very low temperatures. The agrarian transformations in the particular case of Santurbán have been worsened by mining projects. These three zones have all suffered the consequences of different forms of rural violence in Colombia during the second half of the twentieth century.

Thanks to mutual friends in these regions, I have been able to reach you and other peasants. You, peasant and inhabitant of your territory, have produced food from the land, from which you have nourished your family, others from your community, and beyond; but also you have witnessed the changes in that process, and for that reason I am grateful to you for sharing your life stories with me. foods; you can grow on your land, or your eating habits might no longer be the same (either by choice or need). Maybe you or your family have gone hungry or endured times of shortage caused by external situations which have affected your harvest and therefore, your food. Maybe you or your family have been settlers in this land, colonisers or migrants. Maybe you have achieved landownership or are in this process. Maybe you or your parents have "civilised" the land. These reasons make of you a protagonist of the story I want to rescue.

Together we will build a meaningful history full of relevance for the present and future of agriculture and the peasant landscape in the country.

What would taking part involve?

Your participation will be the live narration of your own story, and your land's. We will have a chat where I will listen carefully to your testimony and perhaps eventually ask some questions to clarify a topic or help the narrative flow. You can choose not to answer any question. We will not use more time than you deem convenient. To collect this information I will take notes, but also record your voice. Your testimony will be used anonymously, unless you specify otherwise, that is, expressly indicate your desire to appear with your real name in a potential publication. If you wish to say something off-the-record, the recording will be suspended for as long as you consider necessary. With your permission, we will also take photos, after describing their subject and purpose. If you wish to provide physical evidence, documents or graphic material to illustrate the story, these are very welcome. In this instance, you will be asked to transfer the copyright for their use by this investigation.

It is your right as a participant to withdraw at any time of the interview or even of the investigation as long as there is no publication yet.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

One of the main benefits is to actually be heard. The Colombian peasant has been invisible in history, but for this investigation they are the most important character. We live critical moments in the country, when we use history to understand and not repeat past mistakes. Historical publications telling the communities' difficulties and achievements are part of the reparation that we owe to the rural areas of Colombia. Evidencing the consequences of wrong policies on something as important as the right to food, will give us perspective of what it means to lose our food sovereignty in the territories and the country in general. the history of peasants, their land and their food, has been difficult to find which is why I have come to the regions to look for it, within the memory of those who lived and know the struggle they faced and overcame, or that still endure.

the evidence we can gather here will provide unexplored knowledge about Colombia's food security and food sovereignty in the past, which will potentially help to support the case of food security and food sovereignty for new generations of peasants.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Our interviews, which are basically stories of experiences, do not involve any risk to the physical or psychological integrity of the participants. However, in case of memories that may generate sadness or pain, alternatives such as taking breaks, chats outside of recording, and having accompaniment from family and / or friends are at hand.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You have the right to withdraw at any time during the study, no matter how advanced it is, and at any stage prior to its publication. You do not need to give explanations other than your will to withdraw. All the material related to you, recordings and evidences contributed will be destroyed or returned, without any problem. The only exception is the audio of group workshops, where the participation of several voices makes it difficult to destroy the individual contribution.

How will my information be kept confidential?

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection

The researcher is responsible for the project and will be custodian of all personal data and information provided. The University will be the guarantor of transparency and absolute reserve in the management of your personal information. The audios and evidence gathered during the fieldwork will be kept under the custody of the researcher in private archives and under full security and confidentiality. The transcriptions made of these audios and their translation are the responsibility of the researcher. These could be shared with the thesis supervisors under the same principles of confidentiality committed to the participants in the study. This material will be part of the researcher's personal file and could be used to carry out future research phases or new projects. Transcripts and translations will not be released to other archives other than for academic and research purposes. In which cases, it would always be done under the same principles of confidentiality and commitments acquired with the participants. These signed formats in their English and Spanish versions will always accompany the information in proof of the information management and confidentiality agreement established by the University and the researchers with the participants.

The only case where the information confidentiality could be broken is if the participant reveals a major danger for himself or for others, such as serious threats to his life or physical integrity, or that of others.

It is the researcher's commitment to inform the participants about the investigation results or about future investigations involving their testimony. In case of future research on audios or the material supplied, its use will observe the same confidentiality, security and reservation commitments expressed in the attached consent form. For this purpose, the contact information provided by the participants will be used and will be in held in custody and reserve by the researcher.

The study updates are available to the participants and the general public on the project website: <https://dv2466.wixsite.com/agrarianquestioncol>

Will I receive any payment for taking part?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and "ad honorem".

What will happen to the results of this study?

The investigation results will be summarized in a doctoral thesis to qualify for the PhD in History from the University of Exeter (Non-open access). My ambition is to adapt it later to a book format, so I can take them to a greater audience, in both languages, English and Spanish, to facilitate its distribution both globally and in Latin America and in Colombia.

The research updates can be followed on the project website:
<https://dv2466.wixsite.com/agrarianquestioncol>

Who is organising and funding this study?

The study is planned and executed by the researcher with supervision of their thesis supervisors and thanks to the company and support of local professors and peasantry community members. The main sponsorship is provided by the University of Exeter College of Humanities International PhD Studentship.

Who has reviewed this study?

This project has been reviewed by the [...] Research Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter (Reference Number....)

Further information and contact details

If you wish to contact the research team for more information and/or participate, you can refer to the channels mentioned below. Additionally, if you are not satisfied with any aspect of the project and wish to complain (at any time), you can address a project supervisor, the University of Exeter History Department or the Ethics Management officer, whose data is provided below.

Researcher:

Diana María Valencia Duarte
MPhil/PhD History Candidate, University of Exeter
Armory 402, Rennes Drive, Exeter UK EX4 4R, dv246@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr. Stacey Hynd
Senior Lecturer History, University of Exeter
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Ethics Manager:

Gail Seymour, Research Ethics and Governance Manager
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Thank you for your interest in this project

Appendix 2. Consent Form (English Translation)



Participant Identification Number:

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The Food Question: The agrarian counter-reforms and peasants' food insecurity in Colombia, 1961-2013

Name of Researcher: Diana María Valencia Duarte

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated..... (version no.....) for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by members of the research team (researcher and supervisors) from the University of Exeter, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research.
I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records. I understand that this data will always be previously anonymised, unless I decide to opt out of anonymity.

- * I choose to opt out of anonymity.
I understand that my real name will be used, and I will be identifiable.

4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and anonymous unless I express otherwise, and that taking part involves audio recording to be used for the purposes of a thesis and potential publications from the investigation.

- I authorise photos of the landscape. I understand that they could be used to assess transformations on the landscape within the land which I own

- * I agree to be photographed. I understand that these photographs can illustrate the peasant way of life and culture (I understand that this will opt me out of anonymity).

- I agree on this material being used for reports published in an academic publication, project website and media publication related with this research.

- I understand that these audios, photographs or any evidence shared with the researcher will be part of the researcher's personal archive and will be under her custody from now on, indefinitely.

Version Number: 1.0

Date: 24/10/2018

Page 1 of 2

I agree on the anonymised material (my testimony, landscape photographs, evidence provided) being used by the researcher in future research projects.

I agree on this material being used as teaching or training materials by the University of Exeter within academic activities and public engagement activities

I agree that my contact details can be kept securely and used by researchers from the University of Exeter ONLY to contact me about future research projects

5. I agree to take part in the above project.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Name of researcher taking consent	Date	Signature

When completed: 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher/project file